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A Practical
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
Swearing :
ESPECIALLY
In the Two Great Points
OF
PERJURY
AND
Common-Swearing.

By *William Wake*, D. D. and Chaplain
in Ordinary to His Majesty.

L O N D O N :

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 CONCERNING
Spicing :



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THE
PREFACE.

TH^O the Prevalence of
those Vices, which the
following Treatise is de-
sign'd to Correct, might be more
than enough to justify the Publi-
cation of it; and the Season-
ableness of the Attempt, be a
sufficient Apology for the Mean-
ness of the Performance: Yet
having been Induced to Write upon
this Subject by such a Considera-
tion, as, I think, cannot justly
a 3 be

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be excepted against ; it may not be amiss, before I proceed to what I chiefly aim at in this Preface, to give some short Account, How I came to be Engaged in it.

IT has been the great, and almost singular, Care of our English Government, to Provide, by its Municipal Laws, not only against False-Swearing; (a Vice in which the Interests of Publick Society are so apparently concern'd, that scarce any State has suffered it to go unpunish'd ;) but even against Common and Vain-Swearing too: And which, because it does not so immediately affect Mens Civil Interests, I cannot tell whether any Laws, besides our own, have thought
it

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it their Business to meddle with it.

HOW prudent such a Provision, as this, is, even with respect to the Publick Welfare, can be doubted by none, who either believe it to be the Concern of States and Kingdoms to maintain a General Sense of Religion in the Minds of Men; or have considered what a mighty Influence an Oath, in Particular, has upon the Affairs of Government; and of what Importance it must therefore be to it, that Men should be kept under a very Serious and Reverend Esteem of it. There being nothing more certain, than that if once Men be allow'd to Profane an Oath by

Common and Vain Swearing; they will from thence be apt to go on, in a little while, to a farther Contempt of it: And so, by degrees, arrive to an Unconcernedness even for Perjury its self; as often as it shall be for their Interest to Forswear themselves; and they may hope to do it without the danger of a Present Punishment for their Impiety.

It must therefore be acknowledged to have been not only a Pious, but Politick Design too, of these great Men, whosoever they were, who by putting a Restraint upon Common-Swearing, first endeavour'd to raise an Oath to a Just Respect amongst us: And concluded, with our Saviour, that
the

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the best Way to cut off the very Ground of False-Swearing, would be to make it Penal for Men to Swear at all ; unless it were upon some great occasion, and when it was either absolutely necessary, or (at least) very fitting for them so to do.

A N D as I think it is for the Honour, as well as Benefit, of our Country ; that our Civil-Laws have taken such Care in a Matter which has been generally neglected by most others : So I cannot but observe it to the Praise both of our Religion, and of the Present Government ; that of the Two Attempts that have been made, of this kind, among our selves ; the * First was since * Viz. in 21 Jac. I.
the

the time of the Reformation ; as we know the Latter, and more Perfect, is owing to the Wisdom and Piety of the Present Establishment.

BUT because the best Laws signifie but very little, unless they be, withal, both generally made known, and duly observed : It has, therefore, been the Care of our Law-givers to shew their Prudence no less in their Provision for the Publishing of this Law, than in the Substance of the Law its self. And as in the Case of Perjury, (in which the Civil Courts are principally concern'd ;) it has been order'd that
*the * Statutes, relating to that Sin, should be solemnly declared*

** See 5 E.
 112. c. 9.*

red at every Assize: So for this,
(which seems to be more properly
Religious) they have appointed
the Publication of it to be made
in the * House of God, and at
the Time that Men are Assem-
bled for his Service in it.

* 21 Jas. I.
c. 20. And
so in this
last Act of
K. William
to the same
purpose.

I SHALL need say very
little to shew either how
* Ancient a Custom this
has been in all Christian
Coun-

* In the Theodosian
Code we find an Eccle-
siastical Law of Va-
lentinián, directed to
Pope Damasus, and
Read in the Churches
of Rome, Anno 370.

Cod. Th. Lib. xvi. leg. 20. But Sulpicius Severus carries us
yet higher; and mentions the Reading of the Emperour's
Letter there, Anno 355. And Geshofred, in his Comments up-
on that Law, adds several other Instances of the like Nature.
Such were the Law of Theodosius the Younger against Nesto-
rian; and especially, the Letter of Constantine the Great, in
favour of Athanasius; which he order'd to be publish'd in
the Churches of Alexandria. And that this Custom held
still on, the other Instances of that learned Man plainly
shew. To which add the Tome of Union set forth by Con-
stantinus Porphyrogenitus; and publish'd every Year in the
Churches, in the Month of July: Vid. Matth. Blasius, Lit.
F. cap. 14. And it appears from the Novels, that the Imperial
Laws were not only publish'd in the Churches, but were laid
up in their Archives; and fix'd upon Tables in the Porches
and Avenues of them; and directed to the Bishops for that
end: Novell. viii. c. 14.

Countries; Or with what good Reason our own Law-givers have herein follow'd the Examples of their Fore-Fathers, upon the like occasions. For sure if ever Men will be disposed seriously to consider their Duty, we may justly hope they will then, especially, be so, when they come together for Divine-Worship. And when it shall there be shewn them, that both their Present, and their Future Welfare are concern'd in this observance; That what the Law enjoyns under a Civil Penalty, is no more than what the Gospel had before required upon Pain of Eternal Damnation: Either Men must be utterly lost to all Rational Conviction, or they

they will be prevail'd with, by these Motives, to forsake a Vice; in which there is so great a Danger, so little Pleasure, and no Advantage.

I T was upon the first Solemn Publication, at which I was present, of this Law in that Church, in which it has pleased God to call me to Minister, that I compos'd the following Discourses; and embraced that Advantage, which the Publick Authority had so happily put into my hands, to lay open the Hainousness of a Vice, which had not some such Care been taken to Correct; it would, I fear, have been very difficult for us, by all our other Endeavours, ever to have put a stop to.

BUT

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B U T tho' the Occasion which I took to Write upon this Subject led me no farther than to Treat of Common and Vain-Swearing; yet having resolved to Write upon it, I was willing to make a farther Progress in it: And to pursue it in all the several Parts of it, that our * Saviour's Method, (the Ground I chose to go upon) should direct to me to do.

* Mat. v.
37, &c.

A N D, first; As he laid the Foundation of his Discourse, upon the State of this Matter under the Law; so have I here, (but in short,) endeavour'd to shew, How the Case of Swearing stood, under that Dispensation. And if in my Account thereof I have

adven-

Chap. I.

adventured to give a more general Interpretation of the **THIRD COMMANDMENT**, than some others, of much greater Knowledge in these Particulars, have done: I shall only say, That, I think, I have done it for such Reasons, as will abundantly suffice to justify me in it; and that in forsaking them, I do but close in with many more, neither less learned, nor less approved of, than they.

HAVING thus laid the Foundation for a Right Understanding of our Saviour's Discourse upon this Subject; I go on, with him, to the Consideration of that which is, on all hands, allow'd to have been expressly Forbidden

Chap. II.

bidden to the Jews under the Law, viz. the Sin of Perjury: And have endeavour'd to furnish my Reader with such Principles, as may serve to direct him both how to avoid it; and how to discover, whether he has at any time, or upon any occasion, unhappily fallen under the guilt of it? And having thus laid open the Nature of this Sin; I proceeded, in the next place, to shew the Malignity of it: And how desperate an Offence is thereby committed, not only against God; but against the Common Peace and Welfare of Mankind.

THE truth is, Perjury, as it is a Sin of the most Hainous Nature, whether we consider the
Ho-

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Honour of God; or the Interests of Men: So has it always been pursued not only with the severest Denuntiatiions of Vengeance in the other World; but, for the most part, with very shameful and bitter Punishments in this.

INDEED, among the
 * ancient Romans, tho' the ^{Ciser. de} Censors enquired very scrupulous- ^{Offic. Lib.} ^{iii.}
 sly into it; yet, for a long time, the Penalty of it, was only a † Publick Infamy. And so happy were those Times, that that alone was thought to have been Punishment enough for it. But as the Manners of Men grew worse, so both they were
 b forced

† Vid. Commentarium Gothofredi, in Lib. ii. Cod. Theodos. Tit. ix. Leg. 8.

* *Vid. Leg. Citat. Arcad. & Honor. contra Perjuros.* Tho' Perjury in Judiciary Causes, was before punish'd with a Civil Penalty. *Vid. Gothofred. ibid.*

|| *Diodor. Sicul. Lib.*

1. pag. 69.

forced to * Encrease the Rigour of their Laws as to this Matter: And most || other Nations proceeded against it with the utmost severity; and thought the Guilt of it could be expiated with nothing less than the Life of him who fell under it. And tho' contrary to what I have now observed of the Roman Law;

* See 11 H. our own * Statutes have, of 7. 24 & 25. 23 H. 8. 3. latter Times, been more favourable to such Offenders: Yet

|| See 6 Affize 7. 30 Aff. 24. 40 Aff. 20. 41 Aff. 18. *Glanvil*, lib. ii. cap. 19. *Bracton*, lib. iv. tract. 5. cap. 5. *Fortescue*, cap. 26. And the Summ of all is this; That he who violated his Oath in a Judicial

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by our || Old-Common-Law they were treated with such a Rigour, as tho' it did not extend to Death; yet seems to have been more bitter, than even Death

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Death its self would have been.

Process, should lose the Benefit of the Law ; his Wife and Children should be turn'd out of

Doors ; his Fields should be ploughed up ; his Gardens and Orchards be spoil'd ; his Goods and Chattels should be forfeited to the King ; and himself be condemn'd to Perpetual Imprisonment. This was the Law in the Case of a Petty Jury, attainted for a false Verdict : See Coke 1 Instit. lib. iii. cap. 8. §. 514. And it seems to have been taken from the Laws of King Alfred, upon the like occasion : Vid. leg. Alfred, §. 1. But for other Perjury it has been question'd whether there was any provision made by the Common Law before the 3d of Hen. vii. See Dyer 7 & 8 Eliz. fol. 242. b. And 1 Crook, p. 520, 521. Tho' yet the Mirrour seems to speak in general of Perjury, and the punishment of it : Ch. iv. §. 19. And the Law of King Alfred, before mentioned, extends even to Promissory Oaths. Vid. l. c. cap. de Jura-jurando.

F R O M *this Sin of Perjury, by all confess'd to have been no less forbidden under the Law, than under the Gospel ; I go on, Chap. III. to that in which some have thought the Perfection of the Gospel above the Law to have consisted, as to this Matter ; namely, to enquire, Whether it be Lawful*
b 2 for

for us Christians to Swear at all?

THAT it were very much to be wish'd, that Men would Live so Well, and Deal so Faithfully with one another, as not to need ever to make use of an Oath for the confirmation of what they say, is not to be questioned. Nor do I doubt but that they might live so, as to avoid it in many Cases, in which they too easily indulge themselves in the use of it. But yet still, the present State of the World consider'd, I do not see how it is possible, for the Best Christian, altogether to decline it: Nor is there any reason why Any one should make it a Matter of Conscience wholly to avoid it. W E

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WE are told; indeed, of
 * Gregory Nazianzen, that * Vid. Greg. Presb. in Vit. Greg. Naz. Et Greg. Naz. carm. de Vis. suâ. To. ii. p. 18. A.
 upon his Conversion to the Christian Faith, he resolved, once for all, never to Swear while he lived; and that he did manage himself in such wise as to keep to his Resolution; and did not Swear to the Day of his Death.

And several of the * Ancient Fathers there are, * Basil, in Psal. xiv. Chryf. Hom. xvii. in Matth. Theodoret, Epit. Div. Decret. c. xvi. Epiphani. Hæc. lix. Athanas. Serm. De Passion. & Crucif. Dom. Tom. I. p. 995.
 who have spoken, in such Terms, of this Matter; as if such a Resolution had not been so much the Particular Praise of that Great Man, as the Common Duty of All Christians. But yet, when all is done, either the Methods of Government must be wholly

changed, and some new Models be set up, that were never yet practised in the World: Or were those Fathers now living, they must set some Bounds to their Expressions; and plainly Restrain them to that, which I do indeed look upon to have been their True Meaning; viz. Not to Forbid All Swearing whatsoever, but only * All Voluntary, and Vain Swearing; and in which they were most certainly in the right.

* That this was the sense of *Greg. Naz.* (one of the most eminent Opposers of Swearing in those days) is evident from that Excellent Discourse of his, which still remains to us, against those who *Swear much*. Where first he advises, if it may be, as most safe, not to *Swear at all*: But if that cannot be obtain'd; then in the next place to *Swear only* in such Cases as deserve to be confirm'd by an Oath; As to free a Man's self from danger; to vindicate his Reputation, and the like. See this Subject at large pursued by him, *To. ii. Iambic: m. Περὶ Πόλυρκου*, p. 224.

IT was a Remarkable Defe-
 rence that was paid to the Ho-
 nesty of One heretofore among the
 Athenians, * That being call'd, * *Vid. Ci-*
 upon a certain Occasion, to Swear *ceron. Orat.*
 to the Truth of what he said; *pro l. Com.*
 and being come to the Altar (as *Balb. init.*
 the Manner there was) in order
 thereunto; the Judges would by
 no means allow of it, but thought
 it a shame that a Person, of such
 known Integrity, should not be
 credited without an Oath. And
 in some of the * Ancient

Canons, confirm'd (as ** Καὶ οἱ Νόμοι,*
καὶ οἱ κανόνες κωλύ-
σι κληρικὸν Ὀμῶσαι,
says Photius, Nomoc.
Tit. ix. cap. 1. pag.

b 4

to

953. See also *Cod. Theodos. Lib. 1. Tit. iii. Const. 25.* And
 the same is affirmed by *Matt. Blastares*; viz. That the Ci-
 vil-laws themselves excused *Clergy-men* from Swearing.
Syntagm. Alphab. Lit. E. cap. 22. And *Theodorus Balsamon*
 is of the same Opinion; at least from the time that the *Bas-*
ilicon was composed: In *Phot. Nomocan, Tit. ix. cap. 27.*
 In the *Laws of Lombardy*, and in the *Capitularies of Louis*
 the Emperor, the same Exemption was continued. *Vid. Not.*
Fabrotii,

Fabrotii *ad Balsam*: Collect. 2 *Lib. 1. Cod. Tit. iii. c. 25.*
 And even in our own Country, the Council of Bergham-
 stead, Can. 17. confirm'd this to the Bishops: And in the
Excerpta of Egbert Arch-bishop of York, not long after, we
 find the same Privilege extended to *All Priests*: *Vid. in*
Concil. Spelmann. To. 1.

to this Matter) by the Civil
 Laws; there was that Respect
 paid to the Priestly Function,
 that he who was admitted into
 Holy Orders, was from thence-
 forth free from All Obligation
 to Swear, even in those Cases,
 in which All Others were ex-
 pressly required to do it. Only, if
 need were, they might be obliged
 to give some other Caution of
 their Fidelity, that did not seem
 so much to reflect upon the Sa-
 credness of their Character.

BUT still, to Swear upon
 a just Occasion, was in the ge-
 neral

25. *neral allow'd to be not only Law-
ful, but Necessary : And those
the very Exemptions that freed some
we certain Persons from it, did but
d. in the more confirm the Churches
vil Approbation of it in Others.*

ect *T O enter upon a Particular
on, Examination of the several Pas-
into sages of the Primitive Fathers
ce- which seem to speak against All
on Swearing whatsoever ; is an
es, Undertaking neither Proper for
ex- this Place, nor otherwise Neces-
, if sary for the Vindication of what
ged I have Asserted in the following
of Discourses. But that the most
em Severe among them did allow of
Sa- Swearing, when duly Required,
pon and Reverently Perform'd, is
ge- evident from hence ; That we find
ral the*

*the most Religious Emperours,
and over whom those Fathers,
which seem to speak with the
greatest Warmth against it, had
a very Powerful Influence; never-
theless both to have Solemnly*

** Sworn themselves,
and to have continued
the || Necessity of others
doing likewise. And yet,
it does not appear, that
ever they were censured
by any of those Fathers
upon this Account.*

* See an Instance
of this in *Constantine*
the Great: *Cod. Theo-
dos. Lib. ix. Tit. 1.
leg. 4. Add. Com-
ment. Gothofred. ib.
p. 8. b.*

|| *Cod. l. ii. Tit. 59.
Novell. viii. c. 7, 14.
& ib. xlviii. c. 1. Add.
Phot. Normican. Tit.
xiii. c. 18.*

BUT *this is not all: They
did not only Consent to the Ne-
cessity of Mens Swearing, as
Imposed by the Imperial Laws;
but they themselves Pursued the
same Method; and by their
own*

own Constitutions required it likewise.

I T was a very Solemn, and (which ought yet more to be Remark'd) a Voluntary Oath too, that * Athanasius made, in his Apology to Constantius; to free himself from a certain Suspicion which that Emperour had, it seems, (without any just Grounds) taken up against him.

* *Apol. ad Const. To. I. p. 674. D. Who yet elsewhere speaks as if All Swearing were Unlawful. Loc. supr. Citat.*

St. * Austin freely tells us what his own

* *De verb. Apostol. Serm. xxviii. cap. 9.*

Practice, in this particular, was: That he neither chose to Swear, when he could avoid it; nor refused to Swear, when he was lawfully required so to do.

Even

* See *Balsam. Comment.* in Can. xxix. *S. Basilii* : Nay he took those into Orders who had rashly Sworn not to accept of them ; *Ib. Can. x.* And continued others in their Ministry, *Ib. Et apud Io. Antioch. Collect. Can. Tit. 45.*

|| See Can. *S. Basilii* *ib. lxiv, lxxii.* -- Add. Can. Apost. 25, &c.

*Even * St. Basil himself, than whom none has Written more expressly against All Swearing ; yet, in his Canonical Epistles, not only imposes no Punishment on those who Swore as they ought to do ; but by assigning a suitable || Pennance to those who Sware amiss, did, in effect, acknowledge the Lawfulness of Swearing, when piously and carefully perform'd. And a more ancient Father than he, St. Cyprian, complaining of the Decay of Discipline in the Church ; and that so far as to ascribe the Decian Persecution to the declension of it ; inveighs indeed*

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indeed bitterly against the Iniquity of those Times, * for Swearing falsely, and without a due regard to what they Swore ; but says not a word against the thing its self : Which yet, had he thought all Swearing whatsoever to have been unlawful, he would hardly have let pass, without declaring, upon that occasion, his Resentments against it.

IT was much about the same time, that we find * A-

nother of those Holy Men reflecting, with some warmth, upon Novatian, for obliging those, to whom


he

* *Vid. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. vi. cap. 43. p. 199. D. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, at the same time, both allow'd of and practis'd Swearing. Ib. cap. 40. p. 191. C. And if we would go yet higher ; St. Basil*

will furnish us with the Example of St. Clement, the Companion of St. Paul : *Lib. de Sp. S. cap. 29.* To say nothing of that Representation which *Lucian* makes of the common practice of the Christians, as to this matter, in his *Philopat. pag. 1121.*

* *Non jurare tantum Temere, sed adhuc etiam pejerare: De laps. p. 123. Edit. Oxon.*

he gave the Communion, to Swear to him, that they would never fall off from his Party. This he represents to us as a most Wicked Attempt; but without the least Reflection upon the Act of Swearing, as if there would have been any thing blame-worthy in that, had the Substance of their Oath been lawful, and the Nature of it allowable. Nor can it, indeed, be thought that Novatian himself, who set up for a more exact Observance of the Discipline of the Church than any other of his time; and pretended, for that very reason, to separate from the Communion of the Catholick Bishops, that they did not keep so strictly, as they ought,
to



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to it ; would not only have obliged others to Swear to him, but would have * solemnly sworn himself ; (and that whilst he was yet in the height of his Reputation) had there been any thing in the Act of Swearing contrary to the Opinion of the most Precise Men in those Days. And if we look yet lower, we shall meet with whole Councils which have not only consented to the same Practice, but have been the Authors of forcing Men to submit to it : as the || Council of Ephesus, in the Case of Nestorius, is particularly observed to have done. And from all which it plainly follows, that the ancient Fathers were not against All Swearing

* Euseb.
Hist. Eccl.
lib. vi. cap.
43. pag.
198. B.

|| Vid. Ger.
Vossii Hist.
Pelag. lib.
v. p. 2. pag.
524.

*Vid. Grot.
Annot. in
Mat. v. 34.
Where
there are
several In-
stances of
each of
these.*

ing whatsoever : Nor intended any more by their Expressions to this purpose, than what several of the Heathen Moralists themselves did, when they advised their Disciples to abstain, in like manner, from Swearing altogether ; but yet expounded themselves so, as to shew, that by Swearing, they meant only Voluntary Swearing ; and that they should forbear even that too, only where there was no need of it, nor any sufficient Engagement laid upon them to oblige them to it.

I SHALL conclude these Remarks with that Notable Account which Josephus has given us of the Essenes ; one of the strictest

strictest Sects among the Jews,
and so conformable in their
Manners to the Rules of the
Gospel, that some have mista-
ken them for Christians. Now
one of the Maxims by which, (if
we may credit that Historian)
they govern'd themselves, was this
of our Saviour, * Not
to Swear at All. And
yet to this very Rule
(among others) they
bound themselves with
an || Oath; the better
to secure their obser-
vance of it. And the
only Account that we can give of
which seeming Contradiction,
between their Principle and Pra-
ctice, is this; That in Matters

c

of

* De Bello Judaico :
lib. ii. c. 12, Καὶ Πᾶν
μὲν τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπ' Ἀν-
τῶν ἰσχυρότερον ἔρεκε·
τὸ δὲ ὁμνύειν Ἀυτοῖς
ἐπιεικέστατον καὶ ἥσσον τὴν τῆς
ἐπὶ ὁρκίας ἀπολαμβάν-
οντες.

|| lb. p. 786. Edit. Gl.
Πεῖν δὲ τὴν κοινὴν ἀπαρχήν
τῶν ῥῆς, Ὁρκος Ἀυτοῖς
Ὁμνυσι περὶ αὐτοῖς.

of this nature, tho' the Expressions be general, yet they must still be moderated with such Limitations as both the Nature of the Thing its self requires, and the general Consent of Mankind agrees, ought to be put upon them. But especially, when, by so doing, there is nothing allow'd of, but what is both innocent and reasonable: And the denial whereof would unavoidably run Mankind into endless Mischiefs and Inconveniencies.

AND now, having said thus much in Answer to the Two Great Prejudices which seem'd to lye against the Account which I have given of our Saviour's Prohibition, Swear not at All:
The

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*The one taken from the Universality of the Words themselves ; the other, from the Opinion, which the most Primitive Fathers, have been thought to have entertain'd of this Matter ; and shewn that some Temperament must be allow'd of in the Exposition of it : I shall say no more in behalf of that Interpretation which I have given of it, than this ; That if the Principles which I build upon be allow'd ; (as, I think, I have * shewn * Chap. vii. Sect. 25, &c. they cannot reasonably be deny'd) then must my Explication be confess'd to be both very Natural in its self, and very Agreeable to that which was Evidently our Saviour's Design in that*

c 2

place ;

place ; viz. To rescue the Authority of the Third Commandment, from those Abuses which the Jews had made of it. And tho' by this means it will follow, against the Errour of Some, that All Swearing, is not forbidden ; y^t will it also follow, against the Licentiousness of Others, That all Vain and Needless Swearing, but especially That of Mens Common Discourse, is Utterly Wicked and Unjustifiable.

BUT our Saviour was not content to restrain Men from the Practice of Customary-Swearing only ; but, if I am not very much mistaken, did also farther aim at Another Corruption,
very

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very frequent among the Jews ;
and improved by them to very bad
purposes ; and that was, of Swear-
ing after some other manner,
than by the Name of God
only.

THIS was indeed a very
prevailing Practice not only a-
mong the Jews, but among most

* other Nations, in

those days. And that
which render'd it the

more dangerous, was,

that they accounted it

a Matter of Piety,

to Swear after this Manner :

|| And thought that they hereby

shew'd a great respect to their

Gods, in that they did not make

use of their Names, upon every

* Homer. *Il. A. v. 234.*
Conf. Virg. Æn. xii. v. 206.
Aristoph. Nep. Act. 1. Scen.
3. & Scholiast. ib. Virg.
Æn. vi. v. 351, 458. Æn.
vii. 234. Ammian. Marcell.
Lib. xxi. v. cap. 5. Procop.
de Bell. Persic. Lib. 1. c. 4.

|| *Vid. Suid.*
in Socrat.
p. 780. Ser-
vius in
Virg. Æn.
Lib. ix. v.
300.

ordinary Occasion. *And the Consequence of it was with them, as we are told it was with the Jews ; That they fell, by this means, into a Customary Practice of Vain-Swearing ; and often times accounted it no great Crime, even to forswear themselves.*

*IT is I know very confidently affirm'd by some, That it was no part of our Saviour's Design to Abolish such Swearing ; which they are still willing to favour, as innocent and allowable. But if this Swearing were not only justly to be * Reproved in the Jews, but was made use of by them to very ill Purposes too ; And if the * Design of our Saviour was*

* See below, Chap.

* III. §. 30.

to Correct *those* Abuses which
that People had introduced into this
 Practice, and to prevent Our
 falling into the like Hereafter :
 then, since this could no way so
 effectually be done, as by for-
 bidding this kind of Swearing
 Altogether, and that his Words
 Do Naturally invite Us to such
 a Construction ; I cannot ima-
 gine why we should not Rather
 Extend them to such a Sense,
 than put some kind of Violences
 upon them for the sake of a Pra-
 ctice, if not plainly † E-

C 4

vil ;

† That to Swear

of the Gentiles is Evil, cannot be doubted. Hence
 it was that the *Ancient Canons* of the Church expressly For-
 bade it : See *Concil. Trull. can. 94. Conf. Can. Basil. 81.* And
 the *Civil Law* made such Oaths Void. *Basil. lib. xxii. Tit. 5.*
 But the *Canon Law* is more General: and forbids Swearing
 by *Any Creature* : 22. Q. 1. cap. 7, 8, 9, 10. Yet still they Al-
 low'd to Swear Otherwise than by God only. v. g. *Per Salutem*
Imp. Basil. ib. By the *Eucharist*. *Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. vi. cap. 43.*
 Not to mention any more Particulars. *Vid. August. Serm de Verb.*
Apost. xxviii. Greg. Naz. Carm. Iamb. xx. Tom. ii. Pag. 226.

vil, yet to be sure not Good ;
 nor that can naturally lead to any
 Wise or Good End. But I shall
 insist no longer upon a Point,
 which, however it be determined
 will, either way, meet with a
 sufficient Resolution, as to what
 concerns our Practice ; and then
 'tis no Great Matter what becomes
 of our Speculations concerning it.
 And it is Time for Me to Go on
 from the Consideration of what our
 Saviour has forbidden us ; to
 Inquire, How He has directed
 us to Behave Our selves, in Our
 Communication with One
 Another.

Chap. iv.

I N the Prosecution of which
 Enquiry, I must here Once for
 All freely Confess, that I have

not

not kept so Closely, to the Words of our Saviour, as in the Other Particulars I took Care to Do. The Reason of which was, that I was willing, upon this Occasion, to Consider All the Several Sorts of Confirmation that are commonly made Use of in Mens Conversation with One Another, Under the Degree of an Oath: And which being the Only Thing Our Saviour was here concern'd to Forbid, I thought that Whatsoever was Short of That, might, at least, be fairly Reduced to the Design of this Place.

I HAVE, indeed, endeavour'd in my Reflections upon this Occasion, to shew, that not only the Design of our Saviour
did

did Extend to All these ; but that his very Expressions Themselves might be so Interpreted, as to Comprehend the most of Them. And some very Learned Men there are, who have Accordingly Given us such an Account of Them. But as I will not make my self a Party in this Debate ; so having fairly Represented the Grounds upon which they Go, and given them all the Strength that, I Conceive, They are Capable of ; I shall leave it to Every One to Judge as he sees cause to Do. Only as to the Rules of Practice which I have drawn from my Remarks upon this Point ; those, I think, are Plain and Secure : And may,
as

as such, be follow'd without any Danger, or Scruple, by Us.

FROM the Direction of our Saviour, How we ought to Behave our selves in Our Conversation with One Another; I pass on to the Reason given by Him, Why we Ought not to proceed any Farther? Namely, That Whatsoever is more than These, Cometh of Evil. And of this I offer Two Interpretations, Both Good, and Both indifferently Agreeing with his Words, as they stand in the Original. And I thought it Better for Me to Take Both, than to Prefer That which our Own Interpreters seem Rather to have Approved of: That so I might the
more

more clearly shew upon what just Grounds this Assertion of our Saviour is founded; and what Good Reason He had to Require us, to Manage our Conversation, according to Those Measures he had before Prescribed to Us.

Chap. V.

HAVING thus Gone thro' the Discourse of our Blessed Lord upon this Subject; I Conclude all with Two farther Considerations, the better to Improve what I had before Offer'd, and to Reduce the Whole to Practice. In the Former of which, I Enquire into the Causes of that Great Encrease which has, in these latter times, been made of Both the Sins forbidden by our Saviour

viour on this Occasion ; viz.
Both of False, and of Vain-Swearing: And having done this, I, in the next place, take Occasion from thence to lay down such General Directions, as seem to be the most Proper, under Our present Circumstances, to Draw Men off from the Practice of them Both. And tho' Here, (as indeed throughout this Whole Treatise) I have endeavour'd to bring my Reflections into as Narrow a Compass as it was possible, without either falling into Obscurity on the One hand ; or Omitting what was fit to be Taken Notice of on the Other : Yet, I hope, I have laid down such General Rules, as being
care-

carefully Applied, may suffice to serve the Necessities of the Most of those, who shall need either Direction, or Satisfaction as to these Matters.

A S for the Composure of the following Discourses, it is as Plain as I was Able to make it; and as the First Design I had in Composing of Them, Required it to be. But because it May now be expected that I should Answer for the Grounds of my Assertions; and give some Account upon what Reasons I Built Them: I have therefore taken Care for the Satisfaction of Those who are more Learned, to add all Along such Observations, as shall, I trust, be sufficient to Vindicate me from
ha-

having, either in my Interpretation of Holy Scripture, or in my Deductions from it, advanced Any thing without some tolerable Reason; and seldom without some Good Authority also, for my Doing of it.

IF, after All, it shall be Ask'd how I come to Publish my Reflections upon this Subject, I shall only Add thus much to what I have already said; that as I first Composed these Discourses out of a just Respect to the Publick Authority, and for the Benefit of Those whom God has Committed to my Charge; so being Perswaded that what was, I Hope, not Un-Usefully Heard Once, may be more Profitably Read,

Read, and Consider'd again ;
and Reach many from the Press,
whom it is not Possible for me to
Instruct from the Pulpit : And
having never met with any Ori-
ginal Treatise in our Own Lan-
guage, that had so particularly
handled this Whole Argument ;
I was willing to Contribute my
Part, towards the Reforming
of a Vice, which our Laws had
taken so Worthy a Care to sup-
press.

THIS was the Motive that
first led me to the Publishing of
These Plain Discourses ; And
I hope, through God's Blessing,
They may not be Altogether Un-
profitable to this End. Thus
much I dare say, in Behalf of
them ;

The Preface.

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them ; That to the Pious and Unprejudiced, they Will offer Reasons enough to Convince them of their Duty as to these Matters : And for those who are not so ; it is in Vain to Hope by Any Arguments whatsoever to Reclaim Them.

The Genuine Epistles of St. *Barnabas*, St. *Ignatius*, St. *Clement*, St. *Polycarp*. The Shepherd of *Hermas*, and the Martyrdoms of St. *Ignatius* and St. *Polycarp*. Translated and Published with a large Preliminary Discourse, by *W. Wake*, D. D. 8°. Sold by *R. Sare* at *Grays-Inn-Gate* in *Holbron*.

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St. Mat.

St. Mat. v.

33. * *Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of Old Time ;*
* *Thou shalt not forswear thyself,*
but shalt perform unto the LORD
thine Oaths.

34. * *But I say unto you swear not at all: Neither by Heaven for it is God's Throne ; nor by the Earth for it is his Footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head,*
be-

*because thou canst not make One
Hair White or Black.*

37. But let your Communicati-
on be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: * For
whatsoever is more than these
cometh of Evil.*

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A
 Practical Discourse
 Concerning
 S W E A R I N G.

C H A P. I.

*In which it is briefly shewn, How
 the Case of Swearing stood
 with the Jews, under the Law.*

WHATSOEVER be the meaning of that Expression so often repeated in this Chapter, and made use of by our Saviour as an Introduction to the Duty
 [Ye have heard, that it hath been said by Them of Old Times.]

B ty

ty He was here about to propose to us ; *Ye have heard, that it hath*

† So the *Syriac* Version renders it, and *St. Chryst.* heretofore understood it : *Hom. xvi. in Mat.* Compare *Theophyl.* on the place. And so indeed the *Opposition* between *this* and the following Verse, requires us to expound it : Ἐπρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις --- Ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν.

been said B T, or rather † TO, Them of Old Times : (Whether in those words He designed to referr to the *Law*, as delivered by *Moses* to the *Jews* ; Or as Expounded, and Corrupted, by the *Glosses* of *Those* who follow'd after :) Yet this I take to be without all doubt ; that in the

Command, or rather *Prohibition*, before us, there is nothing proposed to us but what may, if not in *Express Terms* be found in the *Law* of *Moses*, yet by *plain* and *undoubted Consequence* be drawn from the *Words* of it.

2. IT has been thought by

|| So *Grotius* in his Annotations on this place ; and in his Explication of the Decalogue, Command. 3d.

|| Some, that what the Evangelist here renders, *Thou shalt not Forswear thy self*, was Originally delivered by our *Blessed Lord*, in the very

very Words of the Third Commandment ; *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in Vain :*

* And that what follows in the latter part of this *Verse*, *But shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths*, was ^{*Grot. ib. in Mat. v.*} 33

added by him from *Numb. xxx. 2.* as an *Exegetical Explication* of that Precept ; and to shew, that what he was about to deliver concerning it, was principally to be understood of *Promissory Oaths* ; and to which he supposes that *Commandment* was always intended, more Especially, to referr.

3. WHETHER this Conjecture be Good or no, yet this, at least, we may be Confident of ; That we cannot take a better Course to Understand what our *Saviour* meant to prescribe to us *Christians*, as to this point of *Swearing* ; than to consider How the Case of an *Oath* stood heretofore under the Law , and What God proposed to the *Jews* concerning it.

A Practical Discourse

4. AND here, (1st) It is certain, that it was, in the general, permitted to Them to *Swear*; provided that They did it *with that Due Care*, and *after such a Manner*, as I shall presently shew God required Them to Do it.

5. THIS, in many Cases,

the † *Law of Moses* expressly *Obliged* them to:

* And their most *Holy Men* not only did it upon *Other Occasions*; || but when they did it, look'd upon it as an *Honour* paid to *God*, and as a *Service* which should not fail to

be both *Accepted* and *Rewarded* by *Him*. And to take away all scruple, as to this particular; GOD himself not only, upon several Occasions, *Swore* to them; but declared by his *Holy Prophets*, That † *Every Tongue should Swear by him*; * And that *They who did so should be Commended*.

† Exod. xxii. 11.

Deutron. vi. 13.

———— x. 20.

Numb. v. 19, 21.

* Josh. ii. 12, 17, &c.

———— ix. 19, 20.

1 Sam. xx. 17.

1 Kings i. 33.

Ezra x. 5.

|| Nehem. v. 12, 19.

———— x. 29.

† Isai. xlv.

23. Psal. lxxiii.

11.

6. I T

6. I T is certain, therefore, that it was allow'd to the *Jews* to *Swear*, whenever a just Occasion required their doing of it. But then (2dly) They were to *Swear O N L Y* by *God's Name*, and not by the *Name of Any Other*.

7. T H I S was Implied in the *Third Commandment*; but was expressly Declared to Them in several other parts of their *Law*. So in the VIth of *Deut.* vers. 13. *Thou shalt Fear the L O R D thy God, and Serve Him, and Swear by his Name.* And again, Chap. x. 20. *Thou shalt Fear the L O R D thy God; Him shalt thou Serve; and to Him shalt thou Cleave, and Swear by His Name.* And in the Lth of *Isaiah*, God again repeats this *Command*, and that with a more than Ordinary Vehemence, Verse 23: *I have Sworn by my Self, the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, and shall not return; That unto me Every Knee shall Bow, every*
ry

ry Tongue shall Swear. And from all which it is evident, not only, that *God* reserved *This* to himself as his Own peculiar *Prerogative*; but, withal, 'for what reason He did so; Namely, Because *this* is a Part of that *Religious Service* which is *Due to Him Only*, and which cannot, without *Impiety*, be applied to *Any Other*.

8. HENCE we find, that when *Joshua*, in his last Exhortation to that People, thought it necessary, above all things, to warn them against Apostatizing from the Worship of their *Own God*, to the *Gods of the Canaanites*, among whom they dwelt; He thought himself particularly concern'd to mention *This* to them, among the Other Instances of that *Service* which they were to pay to *God Only*: *Josh. xxiii. 7.* *Come not*, says He, *among These Nations that remain among you, neither make mention of the Name of Their Gods; nor Cause*

to Swear by Them, neither Serve Them. ----- But Cleave unto the LORD your God.

9. AND when in process of time They began to break in upon this Caution, and to Swear by some Other Names; We may observe how grievously God resented *this*, almost beyond any Other of their Sins; Amos viii. 14. *They that Swear* Compare Zeph. i. 5. Jer. v. 7. *by the Sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan! liveth; and the Manner of Beer-shebah liveth; Even They shall fall, and never rise up again.*

10. BUT this was not yet all: God required the Jews not only, when they did Swear, to Swear by his Name; but moreover, (3dly) To take care not to Swear by his Name upon Every Ordinary Occasion, nor without a due Regard to what they did Swear by it. So the exprefs letter of the Commandment assures us; *Exod. xx. 7. Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in Vain: And in which,*

tho' the *Original Word* be dubious, and may indifferently signifie either what is *Vain*, or what is *False*: Yet, I think, we ought not So to set up *One* of its *Senses*, as to exclude the *Other*; but should rather suppose, that God therefore pitch'd upon a Term which comprehended *Both*, that so we might, from the Ambiguity of it, infer, that *Both* those *kinds* of *Swearing* were *Unlawful*.

* The words of the *Chaldee Paraphrast* both
 II. NOW in this Opinion I am the rather confirm'd in that I find the * *Chaldee Paraphrast*, the most

in *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* are נַפְשָׁא and נַפְשָׁא the former of which, not only in the *Chaldee*, but *Syriac* and *Arabic*, denotes what is to *no purpose*, for *no Gain*, or *Advantage*: the latter, sometimes *in vain*, but more properly *false*. Nor can it be supposed, that the *Paraphrast* design'd by his latter Expression to explain his former (for if so, what need had he to make use of it?) but being willing to reach the full meaning of the *Original*, and knowing the *Hebrew* word to be capable of *both* those *senses*, he thought good rather to mention both, than to prefer either. But others were not so cautious: The *Jerusalem Targum*, and that of *Jonathan*, both render it נַפְשָׁא, *in Vain*: The *lxx* ἐν μάταις: *Aquila*, ἐν μάταις: And the *Latin Versions* are unanimous in the same sense, and that not only since *St. Hierom's* time, but from the beginning; as is plain from *St. Cyprian*, *Testimon. lib. iii. num. 32.*

most *Authentick*, as well as most *Antient Interpreter* of the *Old Testament*, of the same mind: And for that reason rendring it in *One part* of the *Command* by a *Word* which properly signifies *in Vain*; in the *Other part* by an *Expression*, which originally denotes *Falsly*. And since it cannot be doubted but that *light* and *vain Swearing* is in its Own Nature *sinful*, and what must, by Consequence, have always been *Forbidden* by God as *such*: I cannot but wonder what should move Those, who freely Allow this, and acknowledge the words of the *third Commandment* to referr indifferently to both the significations here proposed; yet, after all, to doubt, * Whether God design'd to Prohibit any thing more *than Perjury* by it.

* This Opinion was very ancient: *Theodoret*

mentions it, *Quest. in Exod. Qu. 41*. But Opposes it, as not coming up sufficiently to the design of the *Command*, and to the proper signification of the Words of it. See *Grot. in Loc. Dr. Hammond, Praef. Catech. Sect. of Swearing*.

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12. BUT (4thly) and to conclude these Reflections : Tho' for the Reasons now mentioned, I am perswaded, that all *Vain and Common Swearing* does not only fall within the Design of the *Third Commandment*, as now Expounded to Us, but was Originally forbidden in the very Letter of it : Yet as *Perjury*, or *False-Swearing*, is by far the Greater Sin, and more dishonourable to God ; so I do not at all question, but that it was more especially Therein prohibited by Him.

13. A N D so much the words of our Saviour, *Matth. v. 37.* do Undoubtedly imply : Who for this reason deliver'd this not only as a *Good Sense* of that *Command*, but as the *Allow'd Interpretation* of it among the *Jews* ; *Thou shalt not For-swear thy self, but shalt Perform unto the L O R D thine Oaths.* Nor indeed could they possibly have made any doubt of this, after that express
Pro-

Prohibition which God had given them to the same purpose, *Lev. xix.*

12. *Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely; Neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God: I am the LORD.*

14. SUCH was the Case of Swearing under the Law: And I need not say, that Christ, (*Who* Mat. v. 17. *came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it,* and who in the very Instance before us has effectually done so;) still requires at least the same Care, as to this matter, of Us now, that God did of the Jews heretofore. But because this last Point is not only of much the greatest moment of any in this Case, but taken for Granted by our Saviour, as a Thing of which no one could make any doubt: I shall Therefore begin my Reflections with a particular Consideration of it; and shew, 1st, *What* it is for a Man to *forswear Himself?* And how many ways he may be Capable of

of so doing? And then, 2dly, Wherein the peculiar *Malignity* of this *Sin* does Consist? And having so done, I shall need say nothing more to perswade any serious, considering *Christian* from the *Practice* of a *Sin*, both so *Hainous* in it self; and so *Ruinous*, not only to Our *Future Happiness* in the Other World; but even to our *present Peace and Security* in This.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

Wherein is consider'd, What Perjury is ; and How many Ways it may be Committed ? And some Reflections offer'd to shew the particular Hainousness and Malignity of it.

1. **T**O proceed the more clearly on this great Point, I must first of all Observe, that to Swear, is properly nothing else but to Call God to Witness ; To Appeal to God for the Truth of what we Speak ; as the highest Confirmation We are Capable of giving to it.

[Thou shalt not For-swear thy self ; but shalt Perform unto the LORD thine Oaths.]

2. NOW the Truth which we may be required , by this means,

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means, to *Confirm* ; may relate either to what is *Past*, or *Present* ; (As when we *Affirm* a thing to *Be*, or *not to Be* ; To *have been Done*, or *not Done* ; In *such a Manner*, and with *such Circumstances* ; Or *Otherwise* :) Or it may relate to something *yet to come* ; (As when we *Oblige* our selves to *Do such a thing*, or *Not to Do it* ; and that under *such certain Conditions*, or without them ; as the Nature of our Engagement shall Chance to be.) The Former of these is usually called, an *Affertory* ; the Latter, a *Promissory Oath*. And because a Man may divers ways *For swear* Himself, in Each of These, if he has not a due Care to prevent it ; It will be necessary for me distinctly to Consider, what are the general Ways by which we may be most likely to Contract such a Guilt in Either of Them.

3. FIRST

3. FIRST then, In the Case of an *Affertory Oath*; He *Forswears Himself*, who *Swears* to the *Truth* of any *Fact*, which at the same time He either *Certainly knows* to be *False*, or does not know to be *True*. As for Example; That *such* or *such a Thing* was *Done*, by *such* or *such a Person*; which, at the same time, He either *Knows* that *Person* did not *Do*, or has no sufficient *Evidence* to move him to *believe* that he *Did Do*. For this being a down-right *Lie* in the *Assertion*, must needs become a *Perjury* by the Addition of an *Oath* to it.

4. AND here it matters not whether a Man *certainly knows* what he *Swears* to be *False*: It is enough that he *does not know* it to be *True*. Nay, or should it happen to be *True*; yet if he thought it to have been *Otherwise*, and yet *Swore* to the *Truth* of it; He *Forsook Himself*: Nor will his *Mistake* at all *Contribute* to the *Excusing*

cusing of his *Perjury* before God.

5. AGAIN: A Man may *For-swear* Himself, not only by *Swearing* that which is *Altogether Untrue*; but by *Prevaricating* in any the *least Circumstance* of what he delivers, and confirms with an *Oath*. As for Instance; * If He *Swears* to a Matter as *Certain*, of which He has only a *Probable Assurance*: * If he *Affirm* that upon his *Own Knowledge*, which He has received only upon the *Credit of some Other*. * If He *Adds* any thing to what He *Relates*; Or willingly *Conceals* any thing that may give light, or weight to; or, in any other *Circumstance*, notably *Affect* the *Point* to which He *Swears*. In All these, and the like Cases; He who *knowingly* and *designedly Prevaricates*, or otherwise *departs*, but in the least *Tittle*, from the *Truth* of what He delivers, *For-swears* Himself; tho' what He says should, in the main, be never so *True*.

6. IN

6. I N short; He who will Swear with a Good Conscience, in any Oath of *this kind*, must first duly Consider what he is about to say; and then must proceed according to the *strictest Measures* of Truth and Fidelity in it. He must neither *Add* to, nor *Diminish* from, what he knows to be the Truth. Must deliver what is *Certain*, as *Certain*; What is *Doubtful*, as *Doubtful*: What he *knows Himself*, as upon his *Own Knowledge*; What he has *Received from Others*, as *Received from Them*: And in so doing he may be sure that he shall not *forswear himself*.

7. A S for the Other kind of Oaths, Secondly; Those which relate to somewhat *yet to come*; he is to be accounted, in the *first* place, to *forswear himself*, who *promises* upon his Oath to *do* that, which, at the same time, he resolves not to *perform*: As for example, That he will *meet a Man in a certain*
C place;

place, where yet he *intends* not to *meet him*; Or that he will do him such a *kindness*, which he resolves, all the while, *not to do* for him.

8. A N D, because no one can be supposed *really* to *intend* to do that, which he *knows*, before-hand, he *Cannot do*: therefore, *Secondly*; He who *Swears* to do any thing which is *apparently* beyond his *Ability*, and which he cannot but be sensible is so, must be reckon'd to fall under the same *guilt*; and to *for swear* himself, as effectually, as if he had *directly intended* not to *perform* what he *obliged* himself to do.

9. T H U S if a Trader who is not worth a *Hundred Pounds* in the World, nor knows which way to find credit to raise such a Sum; shall yet, to over-reach another, who is a stranger to his Concerns, and to gain some present advantage to himself by it, *Swear*, upon a certain day, to pay him *Five Hun-*

Hundred; and fail of fulfilling it: He must be look'd upon to have been *forsworn*, not only after such his *failure*, but from the very *first Minute* that he *swore* to do *that*, which he *knew* it was not in his *power* to *perform*. Nay, tho' by some lucky accident, which he did not fore-see, he should be enabled to *make good* his *Promise*, and accordingly *fulfil* it; yet would not this clear him of having *sworn falsely*, at the *time* that he *made* his *Oath*: Because, at that *time*, he had no *prospect* that he should be *able*; nor could by consequence *really intend*, to be as good as his *word*.

10. A N D for the same reason it will follow farther, *Thirdly*; That if a Man *swear* to do *any thing* which he knows it is not *Lawful* for him to do; he *forswears himself*, tho', at that time, he should *intend* to *fulfil* it. Because by so doing, he *obliges* himself to

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do that which he *knows* he Ought not to do ; nor, if he means to behave himself like a good Man, must presume to *perform*.

II. I N D E E D, as to these two last Instances ; If the *Promise* so *sworn* to, as I have supposed, had neither any *known Impossibility* in it, nor was *Unlawful* to be *fulfill'd*, at the *time* when the *Oath* was made ; but by some *following Accident* became either *Impossible* or *Unlawful*, before the *time* in which it ought to have been *accomplish'd* : In this Case, the Person who *swore*, will have done nothing amiss ; nor be otherwise Obliged by his *Oath*, for the *present*, than to *perform* what he *promised*, as far as he is yet *Able*, and it may be *Lawful* for him to *do* it. But if, in process of time, these *Impediments* should be *removed*, and the *Obligation* of his *Oath* still continue *in force* : Then he will, from thenceforth, become engaged to a *complete performance* of

of his *Promise*; and *for swear* himself, if he shall *neglect*, or *refuse* the *fulfilling* of it.

12. B Y consequence, Fourthly; He who *Swears* to do any thing *contrary* to what he had *before sworn* to do; (his *former Oath* still continuing to oblige) must *swear falsely*; and put himself under an absolute *necessity* of being *for sworn*. Because, in this *Case*, either he must keep his *latter Oath*; and then he will be guilty of *Perjury* by the breach of his *former Obligation*: Or he must stand to his *first Engagement*; and, by so doing, act *contrary* to his *second Oath*.

13. A N D this I say, supposing the *former Oath* still to *continue* to oblige. For, otherwise; If the *Oath first made*, were either *in it self unlawful*; and, as such, from the *beginning* of *no force*: Or if the *Obligation* of it were founded upon such *Circumstances*, as render'd it valid only for a *certain Time*, and

under some *certain Conditions* ; and either that *Time* is *pass'd*, or those *Circumstances* are *altered* ; and so the *Reason*, and *Foundation* of the *Oath Ceasing*, the *Obligation* of it *Ceases* together with *them* : In all these Cases, the *latter Oath* will be never the less lawful to be taken, for its being contrary to the *Tenour* of a *former*, which either *never* did *oblige at all* ; or the *Obligation* of which was evidently *expired*, before the taking of the other.

14. B U T, Fifthly : Tho' a Man should *promise nothing*, but what he is both *Able* to *perform*, and *may Lawfully fulfil* ; and should truly *Intend*, when he *swears* to it, to *Act* according to his *Oath* : Yet, if he shall afterwards *change* his *Mind* ; Or, by any *culpable neglect*, omit to *make good* his *Promise*, or *render* himself *uncapable* of *doing* it ; In all these Cases, he will become *perjured* by such his *omission* : Not indeed from the time that he
took

took the *Oath*; but from the time that he *should*, and, but for his own fault, *might* have perform'd it.

15. A N D this I say, supposing that the *Oath* was neither obtain'd by any such *force* or *fraud*, as render'd it *void* from the *beginning*; and that the *Person* to whom it was *made*, and who was alone concern'd in the *advantage* of it, does *expect*, and *insist* upon, the *performance* of it. For otherwise, if either the *Oath* were *void* from the *beginning*, and did never *oblige* at all; or if *he* to whom it was *made*, and for whose *security* it was *taken*, shall think fit to *release* it: In this Case the *Person* who took the *Oath* will become *clear* of all *obligation* by it; and not be *for-sworn*, tho' he *should neglect* to *fulfil*, what he had *promised* to *do*.

16. IT will, I presume, be needless for me to add, Sixthly; That he who will keep himself from *swearing falsely*, must deal *clearly*, and *openly*, in all that he *swears* unto.

* Must *intend* to be *understood*, according to the *common* and *natural* import of the words in which he *swears*. * Must use no *Equivocation*, no *Mental-Reservation*, where-

by to impose upon those to whom he *swears*. But must account himself *obliged* to do, according as his *Words* and *Actions* declare: And

* *Apud Ciceron. de Offic. lib. iii.*

not think to escape with his * *Pre-* tence, who *swore with his Tongue*, but kept his *Mind free from being obliged by it*. Because all these are, in truth, such manifest *Prevarications*, so opposite to the *Fairness* and *Ingenuity* of an *Honest Man*; that a Man must be desperately deluded indeed, before he can think that he may escape the *guilt* of *Perjury*, by such means.

17. I WILL rather observe this one thing farther, and which indifferently respects *both* the *kinds* of *Oaths* I have now mentioned: That as, in all these *Cases*, he who neglects to acquit himself according to the true *meaning* of what he swears, *forswears* himself; so if he shall by any means *knowingly*, and *purposely*, *seduce*, *persuade*, *assuage*, or otherwise *tamper*, with any *other person*, to *forswear* himself; he will, by his so doing, become *partaker* in the *Perjury*; and render himself even more *guilty*, than he who by his encouragement, or instigation *forswears* himself.

18. NAY farther: * He who *exact*s an *Oath* of another, where-
by he either *certainly knows*, or may

* So St.
Augustine
expressly
determines:
rea-
Serm. de

Verb. Apost. 28. cap. 10. Et ipse qui exigit jurationem, multum interest, si nescit illum falsum juraturum, an scit. Si enim nescit, & ideo dicit, Jura mihi ut fides ei fiat; non audeo dicere non esse peccatum; tamen Humana tentatio est. Si autem scit eum fecisse, novit fecisse, vidit fecisse, & cogit jurare, Homicida est. Ille enim suo Perjurio se perimit: sed iste Manum interficientis & expressit & pressit.

reasonably suppose, that the *Person* of whom he *requires* it will *for-swear* himself; does by that means, if not involve himself in an *equal* *guilt*, yet render himself not much less *criminal*, than he who commits the *Perjury*: And must expect to render an *Account*, not only for the *Disbonour* which, thereby, is done to *God*; but also for his *Un-charitableness* towards his *Neighbour's Soul*.

19. F R O M what has been said, it may appear, What it is for a *Man* to *Forswear himself*? And *how many Ways* he may be liable so to do? I proceed,

(2dly) To offer some *Reflections* to shew, Wherein the *Peculiar Malignity* of this *Sin* does consist?

20. N O W that will appear from this one plain *Observation*; and which no one, who understands

stands what an *Oath* is, can make any doubt of: Namely, That he who Forswears himself, does thereby not only in a most desperate manner * *Affront* the *Majesty* of *God*, and * *Wound* his own *Soul*; but does, moreover, * *Render* himself *criminal* towards his *Neighbour* also; and, as much as in him lies, * *Declare* himself a *Common Enemy* to *Mankind*.

21. FOR 1st: As to what concerns the *Majesty* of *God*; What can strike more directly at that, than this *Sin* of *Perjury*? When a *Man* shall not only presume to *Lie*, and *Cheat*, and *Abuse* his *Neighbour*; but, the better to accomplish all this Wickedness, shall dare even to *Appeal* to *God* for his *Integrity*: And, by so doing, endeavour to intitule him, who is *Truth* its self, to a part in his *Sin*; as if he would approve of his Villany; and become, in some measure, *Confederate* with him in his *Impiety*.

22. THIS

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22. THIS is the true *Meaning* of every *Wilful Perjury*: And then I need not say, what a Complication of Guilt and Impudence, there must needs be in it.

23. IF we consider the *Nature* of this *Sin*, with respect to Men, the least that can be said of it is this; That it is a *wilful, deliberate, Imposition* upon the *Candor* and *Sincerity* of him to whom we *swear*: Which sure must be one of the *basest*, and most *dis-ingenuous Practices* in the World.

24. AND as for the *Design* of it; that is, usually, not at all less sinful, than the Means that are made use of for the accomplishment of it. Whilst the Person to whom we *swear*, is not only to be *deceived*, but, by vertue of that *deceit*, is to be injured in his *Estate*; his *Reputation*; nay or, it may be, to the loss of his very *Life* it self.

25. AND

25. A N D this, God knows, were bad enough, were the *Sin* to end here. But that it does not; It proceeds still farther: Whilst for the accomplishment of this vile purpose, the *false swearer* does not only not tremble at the thought of the *Divine Justice*; but *flies* in the very face of it; and *recurr*s to God both for the *countenance* of his *Treachery*, and for the *confirmation* of the *Lie*, by which it is to be brought about.

26. N O W he who can be so hardy as to do this; must either not believe that there is any God at all; or he must disclaim his knowledge of, and concern for, what is done here below: Or, if he confesses both these; he must then be concluded to *desire* his *Vengeance*. For I cannot suppose any one to be capable of so far mistaking the *Divine Nature*, as to think, that a God of *Truth*, will either endure to be made a *Party* to what is false;

false ; or not *avenge* himself on that Man, who shall presume so to do.

27. SUCH therefore is the *Malignity* of this *Sin* , as it *relates* to God : Nor is it, *adly*, any less as it *respects* our *selves*.

28. FOR proof whereof I must observe, that in every *Oath* God is appeal'd unto, not only as a *Witness* of the *Truth* of what we *say* ; but as a most just and powerful *Judge* too , to *punish* us for our *falsehood*, if it be not.

29. THIS is so *Essential* to the *Nature* of an *Oath*, that, without it, all the *security* of such an *Appeal* would be quite lost ; and the *design* of *Swearing* , overthrown. For what reason would any one have to *believe* another upon his *Oath*, more than upon his *Bare Word* ; but that both he who *swears*, and he to *whom* the *Oath* is *made* , do believe, that *God* is thereby made the *Surety* of what is spoken : And

will

will avenge both Himself first, and then the Person whose *Trust* is, by this means, *deceived*; upon that Man, who shall be so presumptuous, as by *swearing falsely*, to abuse both?

30. NOW this being granted; and which, without destroying all the *Benefit* and *Intention* of an *Oath*, cannot be *deny'd*; it must follow, That there is hardly any *Sin* by which a Man does so directly wound his *own Soul*, and cut himself off from all the *hopes* of *Salvation*, as by this. Because in this *Sin*, a Man gives up all claim to *God's Mercy*; nay more, desires *God* so to deal with him as what he says is true; that is, in other words, to damn him, if it be not. And what can he who has done this pretend to, or even hope for, at *God's* hands? Who has already given *Verdict* against himself; and with his own Mouth pronounced, or rather chosen, his own *Doom*?

31. AND

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31. AND this I take to have been the Ground of that terrible *Clause* in the *Sanction* of the *Third Commandment*; the like whereof we do not meet with in any other, nor can we suppose that it was added to this, without some peculiar design in the doing of it: *Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in Vain; For the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain. He will not hold him guiltless, that is, he will not forgive him: Will not treat him with that Favour he will do other sinners: But will look upon him as a guilty, condemn'd Malefactor; one whom his own Mouth hath convicted, and will punish him accordingly.*

32. SUCH is the *Danger* to which every *Perjury* a Man commits, exposes his immortal *Soul*. And if we may estimate the *Hainousness* of any Sin, by the *hatred* which God bears to it; we must then

mitted in the *Publick Administration* of *Justice*; and by means of which, either *Honest Men* are *Condemned*; or *Evil-doers* are *Acquitted*; and the *Ministers* of *Justice* are made the *Instruments* of *Unrighteousness*; and all the *Ends* of their *Institution* are rendred not only *Useless*, but even *Hurtful* to the *Common-wealth*.

36. **A N D** thus far, every *single Act* of *Perjury* is an *Offence* against *Man*, as well as a *Sin* against *God*. But now, if we shall consider the *Nature* and *Tendency* of such a *Practice* in the general; and reason upon the *proper* and *natural Effects* of it; we shall find it to be a *Common Abuse* of *Mankind*: *Destructive* of the very *Foundation* of *Humane Society*; and which being allow'd of, must tend to the overthrow of all *Peace*, and *Right*, and *Property*, in the *World*.

37. **A N D** that **I** thus prove: *The Foundation* of all *Society*, and without which no *Affairs* of *Life*
can

can be transacted, is that *Common Trust* and *Confidence*, which Men naturally have in one another. Without this, no *State*, no *Community*, tho' never so small; not a *Private Family* can subsist. There can be no *dealing* with, nor *dependance* upon, one another. Every Man must become afraid of his Neighbour; and not account his *Goods*, or even his *Life* it self, any longer his Own, than he can guard them against the *Cunning* or *Force* of the next Man he meets, and who (for ought he knows) may design to rob him of both.

38. WHICH being so, it must follow, That whatsoever does in its own nature tend to *Overthrow* this *Trust* between Man and Man, must be look'd upon as a *Crime* against *Humane Society*; because it naturally leads to the *destruction* of it.

D 2 39 NOW

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39. N O W that *Perjury*, in the most outrageous manner, does: Inasmuch as it violates the *strongest Security*, that one Man is capable of giving to Another, of his *Truth* and *Sincerity*. And therefore the *false swearer* is so far from deserving any Favour of Men, that were he dealt with, as he ought to be, he should be accounted to have *forfeited* all *Right* to the *Benefits* of *Society*: Should be treated as a kind of *Out-law* in the *Common-wealth*; an *Enemy* to *Truth* and *Justice*, to *Peace* and *Property*; and no longer under the *Protection* of those *Laws*, by which others are preserved in their *Rights* and *Liberties*.

40. A N D now, when such is the apparent *Malignity* of this *Sin*, that it renders Men not only *Obnoxious* to *God's Vengeance*, but even *Uncapable* of his *Mercy*; and, as if that were not enough, exposes them to the *Resentments* of *Man-kind* too; One would think nothing

thing more could be desired to draw Men off from the practice of such a Vice; as at once bespeaks them unworthy to live upon the Earth; and, without a very extraordinary Repentance, will be sure to shut them out of the Kingdom of Heaven.

41. IT is indeed a Matter of very sad Consideration, to think, that under so Pure and Holy, so Just and Sincere an Institution, as that of the Gospel; there should be any need either of laying down any *Rules* for the *Prevention* of such a *Sin*, or of *Using* any *Arguments*, to draw Men off from the *Commission* of it. But alas! Experience shews, that there is, at this day, but too much need of Both. And that after all which either the Commands of God, or the Laws of Men, have been able to do for the Suppression of it; yet by reason of *False-swearing*, not only Mens Souls suffer, but our very *Land its self mourneth*.

42. I SHALL conclude these Reflections with the same Exhortation that the Prophet *Zachary* heretofore made to the *Jews*; under much the same Circumstances with ours at this day, as to what concerns this Great Evil: *Zech. viii. 16.* "*These are the things that ye shall Do: Speak ye Every Man the Truth to his Neighbour; Execute the Judgment of Truth and Peace in your Gates. And let None of you imagine Evil in your Hearts against his Neighbour; And Love no False-Oath: For All These are Things that I Hate, saith the LORD.*"

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

Wherein is shewn, That All Swearing whatsoever, is not Forbidden under the Gospel: And an Enquiry is made, What that Swearing is, which Our Saviour has Prohibited, as Absolutely Evil and Unlawful.

I. **I**T has been the Mistake of [But I say unto you, Swear not at All, &c.] some who have attended more to the *Words* of our Saviour, in that Passage of *St. Mat. ch. v. 34.* * Several *I say unto you, Swear not at All;*

D 4

than

find in some of the Fathers themselves: But the *Pelagians* held it as their Opinion: See *Hilar. Epist. ad August. T. 2. Ep. 88. Pelag. Epist. ad Demetriad. apud Hieron. T. 2. Celsus: apud Euseb. T. 4. de Scientia Divi. Leg.* So did the *Waldenses* after them: not to mention those Fanaticks of our own times, who do likewise.

than either to the *Occasion*, or *Design* of them ; to Conclude, That *All manner of Swearing Whatsoever is utterly Forbidden to Christians under the Gospel*. And indeed not only the Prohibition of our Blessed Lord in that place ; but that Express Confirmation which we meet with of it, in the vth of St. *James*, ver. 12. does seem, at the first sight, to give but too much Countenance to such a Conclusion.

2. TO clear this Difficulty, and to shew How far it may still be lawful for a *Christian* to Take an *Oath* ; but yet withal, with how great Care and Circumspection he ought to Do it ; I shall now enter upon a particular Enquiry into this whole Matter : and endeavour with all possible Exactness to discover, what the Design of our *Saviour* was, in that passage upon which this difficulty is founded, and by which it must be determined.

3. IN pursuance of which Enquiry, I shall not doubt in the (1st) Place to Affirm; That How much soever the *Words* under Debate, if strictly taken, may seem to favour such an Opinion; yet it was never the *Intention* of our Lord utterly to forbid All Swearing whatsoever, as Simply and Absolutely Unlawful, under the Gospel. And that I Affirm, upon these two Accounts;

1st. That there was *no Reason* Why He should Do so; but rather a Great deal of Reason to the *Contrary*. And,

2dly. That it is Certain He did *not Do it*: And therefore that we must put some *Restriction*, upon that seemingly *General Prohibition* before mentioned, *Swear not at All*.

4. And 1st. That there was *no Reason* why our Saviour should have *Forbidden all Swearing* whatsoever, is Evident from hence; That

That an Oath being in its Own Nature nothing else but an *Appeal* to God for the *Truth* of what we say, must be Acknowledged, when *Duly* and *Reverently* taken, to have nothing *Evil*, or otherwise *Irregular* in it: but on the contrary, to be an *Act* of *Religious Worship*; and by which the Honour and Authority of God, are eminently advanced. Forasmuch as by *Calling* of God to *Witness* in all *Places*, and upon all suitable *Occasions*, We confess Him to be *Everywhere Present*; To *Know* and *Observe* all the *Affairs* of *Men*; To be the *Searcher* of the *Heart*: In a word, To be most *True* and *Faithful Himself*; and a most *Just* and *Powerful Avenger* of all *Falshood* and *Treachery* in *Others*. And by all this, We do evidently *Declare* and *Magnifie* his *Divine Perfections*; and shew to all the *World* what a *Sense* we have of his *Goodness* and *Greatness*.

5. HENCE

5. HENCE it is that God Evermore Reserved this as a proper Part of that *Worship* which was *Due to Himself Only*; and might not, without Impiety, be given to Any Other. He commanded the

Jews not more to * *Serve him*, than to *Swear by His*

Name: And when, in process of time, they began

to *Swear by some Other Gods*; I

have shewn you both How grievously He † *Resented the*

Affront, and How severely

He was pleased to *Pu-*

nish them for it.

* Deutr. vi. 13.

x. 20.

Exod. xxiii. 13.

Josh. xxiii. 7, 8.

† Jer. v. 7.

Hof. iv. 15.

Amos viii. 14.

Zeph. i. 5.

See above, Chap. I.

6. NOW this being the Case

of an *Oath*, that, when Duly and

Reverently taken, it is so far from

having any thing Amis in it, that

it is rather an *Act of Religious Wor-*

ship; and, as such, *Honourable to*

God, as well as *Useful to Mankind*:

What Reason can there be given,

why our *Saviour* should Aim at the

Utter Abolishing of it? Or what is

there

there to be Assign'd in it, Unworthiness of that Religion, which He Came to Establish in the World?

7. BUT if there be therefore no Reason to be given, Why our *Saviour* should have *Forbidden* All manner of *Swearing*; Sure I am there are Reasons enough to be offer'd, Why He should not: And those such as will render the *Opinion* of Those who pretend He has Done it, very *Improbable*; which is All I am yet concern'd to Do.

8. FOR, indeed, What *Practise* is there upon which the *Peace*, and *Welfare*, and *Security* of *Mankind*, does more depend, than upon the *Serious*, and *Sacred Use* of an *Oath*? It is this Unites Men into Society with Each Other: Secures to the Magistrate, the Obedience, and Help of the People; and to the People the Careful, and Regular Government of the Magistrate. It is upon This Assurance

rance that the greatest Affairs of Life are transacted; Mens Fortunes, determined; and Justice its self Upheld and Maintain'd. By This, Evil-doers are Convicted; Injuries are Redress'd; And Right is Administred. Thro' This, Men are enabled to Treat with Those whom they never saw before: Of whose Integrity they can have no Other Security; nor, Having This, do they desire any Better. In short; How great a Confusion, How insuperable a Mischief, the *utter Abolishing of all Swearing*, must bring to the Affairs of Mankind, this One Consideration may suffice to shew; that, (the Treachery and Distrust of Humane Nature considered) it would almost utterly destroy all Confidence in One Another; would Dissolve Society, and lay the Ground of an Eternal Fearfulness and Suspicion between every Man and his Neighbour: and so bring in, in Good Earnest, that

State

State of War, which some have fancied Men naturally are Born in; and which, 'tis certain, nothing but Mutual Trust and Compacts, can keep them from.

9. A N D, if this be so, can it Reasonably be imagined that our *Saviour Christ*, who was so Great a Lover of Men, and who so well knew of what Use, or rather of what Necessity, the Religious Practice of *Swearing* was to the World; would, without any just Ground for his so doing, have Utterly Forbidden the Continuance of it?

10. B U T especially, when it shall farther be Consider'd, that *God*, under the *Law*, did not barely *Tolerate* this *Practice* in the *Jews*, as a Necessary Condescension to their Infirmities: But upon every

fitting Occasion, Himself ||
Swore to them; and in many Cases, † *Required* them to Do likewise; as has been before observed.

|| Above 70 Instances of this may be taken out of the Old Testament.

† Exod. xxii. 11. Numb. v. 19. 21. -- xxx.

15. Deut. xxix. 12. 2 Chron. vi. 22.

11. NOW

11. NOW this, as it *
 plainly shews, that there
 can be nothing *sinful* in the
 Practice of *Swearing*, in the
 General; so does it ren-
 der it still more Improbable,
 that our *Saviour* should
 not only, without need,
 have deprived Mankind of so Use-
 ful an Institution; but by doing of
 it, should also have cast some sort
 of Reflection upon the Law of God
 its self, which not only *Allow'd*, but
Required the *Using* of it: And that
 too with Relation to that part of
 it, of which He tells us, nevertheless,
 in this very Chapter; That He Mat. v. 17.
came not to destroy the Law, but to
fulfil it. And which we ought not
 therefore to doubt was what He
 Intended, in the *Third*; as we Con-
 fess it was what He Did, in the
Other Commandments.

12. I CONCLUDE, there-
 fore, that upon all these Accounts
 it is, at least, *very Improbable*, that
 our

* *August. de Verb. Apost. Serm. 28. Si Peccatum esset Juratio, nec in Veteri Legge diceretur, Non Perjurabis, reddes autem Domino Jus-jurandum tuum. Non enim peccatum præciperetur nobis.*

our Blessed Saviour should have designed Utterly to Forbid all manner of Swearing as Sinful and Unlawful. I add, 2dly, That whatever that Passage, we are Here enquiring into, may seem to Offer to the Contrary, it is Certain He did not do it; as I shall now make Appear.

13. THAT St. Paul has solemnly Sworn in almost every One

* It is true St. Augustine tells us, that the Pelagians deny'd these to be Oaths: and Held nothing to be Swearing, unless it were put into that express Form; *B R G O D*. But He tells us withal, that their only reason for denying this was to avoid the Example of St. Paul, and the force of our Argument taken from it: And justly charges them thereupon with an utter Ignorance of what it was to Swear. See To. 2. Epist. 89. ad Hilar. And yet St. Basil was once Almost of the same mind: But it was the same Reason that seems to have led him to it. See his Exposit. in Psal. xiv.

of his Epistles, is a * Truth so Evident, that it must be Impossible for any One who knows what an Oath is, to be Able seriously to doubt of it. God is my Witness, says He, Rom. i. 9. I call God for a Record upon my Soul, 2 Cor. i. 23. The God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, who is Blessed for Evermore,

vermore, knoweth that I lie not, 2 Cor. xi. 31. Behold, before God, I lie not, Gal. i. 20. And Several other Expressions he elsewhere has of the like nature.

14. NOW in All These, either this Great Apostle was Guilty of *Sinning*, or he was not. That he committed any *Sin* in thus Writing; but especially a *Wilful*, *Known*, and *Deliberate Sin*; is very hard to suppose: I am sure must never be allowed by those who believe him to have been acted, by the immediate *Inspiration* of the *Holy Ghost*, in what he wrote. And yet supposing our *Saviour* to have utterly *forbidden* the Use of *Swearing*, to All Christians, and upon Any Occasion; How shall we ever be able to Excuse him, from a Gross, Presumptuous Contempt of his Commandment?

E 15. THAT

15. THAT St. Paul should have continued all his Life ignorant of such a Prohibition, is very strange: Nor has it, that I know of, been Pretended by Any.

16. THAT he had any particular Allowance made to him, to exempt him from the Obligation of it, and to Authorize him to Act directly Contrary to the Command of Christ, and to the Common Duty of all other Christians, does not appear; nor ought, without some very good Grounds to be supposed by us. I conclude, there-

fore, * That had the Use of Swearing been utterly Taken away under the Gospel; neither would St. Paul have laid so great a Stumbling-block in our way, as he could not but think his Example might be likely to prove to the Church

* So St. August. l. de Mendacio ad Consentium, To. iv. Juravit ipse Apostolus in Epistolis suis, & sic ostendit, quomodo accipiendum esset quod Dictum est; Dico Vobis, Non jurate Omnino. --- And a little after: Quia precepti Violati reum Paulum, praesertim in Epistolis conscriptis atq; Editis ad Spiritualem Vitam, Salutemq; Populorum, nefas est dicere; Intelligendum est illud quod positum est, Omnino, ad hoc positum, ut Quantum

Church of Christ: tum in te est non Affectus, non Ames, non quasi pro Bono, cum aliqua Delectatione, Appetit; Jus-jurandum.---
 Nor would the *Holy Ghost* have given so much Countenance to a Practice, neither very Commendable in its self; nor, upon any Account, to be Imitated by Those, for Whose Benefit and Instruction, those very *Epistles* were *Inspired* by him.

17. BUT we have not only the *Example* of St. Paul, tho' that were enough, to direct us in this Matter. Our Blessed *Saviour* Himself has done likewise; and * that by the Confession of those, who yet will by no means allow of his *Apostles Swearing*. It has been thought by † some, that that *Form of Speech* so often used by our LORD in Confirmation of what He delivered, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; was not merely a *Veheement Asseveration*, but rather a *Direct* and *For-*

* Vid. Cælest. Epist.

de Scientia Divinae legis:

Apud Hieron. T. IV. p. 63. ---

† So Origen in Mat. Tract. 35. p. 114. L. Chryf. in Heb. Hom. 11. August. in Jo. Tract. 41. Hieron. in Ezek. c. xvi. In Vet. Testamento Dei Jurementum est, Vivo Ego, Dicit Dominus: In Novo autem, Amen, Amen, dico Vobis. Greg. Nyssen. de Scop. Christian. To. iii. p. 311.

* See Dr.
Hammond,
on Mat.
xxvi. Lett. i.
Grot. in
Mat. xxvi.
63. ---

man Oath. Tho' in this, I confess, I am not so well satisfied, as to be willing to lay any great stress upon it; yet that he did, truly * *Swear*, at his Arraignment before the High-Priest, is hardly to be doubted. When being *Adjured* by him, (after the Manner used among the *Jews*) to tell him *Whether he were the Christ*, or No : He readily complied with the Obligation that was laid upon him; and answer'd plainly, that *he was*. And in the xth of the *Revelations*, St. *John* puts it beyond all dispute, that the *Angel*, with whom he discoursed, did do likewise, and that with great solemnity too; For *he lifted up his hand, and S W A R E, by Him that Liveth for Ever and Ever : Ver. 5, 6.*

18. I CONCLUDE therefore, That what God both * *Prescribed*, and * *Practiced* under the *Law*; * What not only St. *Paul*, but our *Saviour Christ* himself, and an
An-

Angel from Heaven, continued to *Use* under the *Gospel*: * What, being duly perform'd, is for the *Honour* of *God*, and the *Benefit* of *Mankind*; but, being * *Utterly Forbidden*, must turn very much to the *Detriment* of the *World*: As it cannot be *in its self* *Evil*, so neither was it ever intended to have been *Abolisb'd* by our *Blessed LORD* as such.

19. B U T what then shall we say to this *Passage* of *St. Matthew*? *Swear not at All*. Can any thing be more *Express*? Or could our *Saviour* have spoken more *plainly*, had he *design'd* to have *done*, what some pretend he *has done*?

20. T O this I Answer, and it is the next Consideration I have to offer for the clearing of this Difficulty, (2dly) That it is not enough that the *Words* of any *Prohibition* are *General*, to oblige us to understand it in the utmost extent that the Expressions are ca-

pable of : But we must withal consider, what it is *reasonable* to suppose was *designed* to have been *forbidden* by them.

21. FOR Proof of which Remark, Let us look back only to the 21st Verse of this Chapter; where we meet with a Case not very different from that before us. *Ye have heard*, says our Saviour, *that it has been said by them of old times, Thou shalt not Kill.* And in the xxth of Exodus, the Command is Absolute and Express, *Thou shalt not Kill.* And some, we know, have been so very tender as to imagine, that it is no less unlawful in any Case, or upon any Pretence, to *put a Man to Death*, than others have thought it to be to *take an Oath.* And yet at the same time that that *Prohibition* was delivered to the *Jews*, God himself establish'd the *Power of Life and Death*, in the *Civil Magistrate*; and in one of the first *Laws* that was given to *Man-kind*,

kind, declared, *That whoſo ſhed* Gen. ix. 6.
Man's Blood, by Man ſhould his
Blood be ſhed.

22. TO know therefore how far we are to extend the Force of any *Prohibition*; we muſt conſider, not only how *General* the *Letter* of the *Law* is, but what were the *Occaſion* and *Deſign* of *Making* of it. Now the *End* of the *Sixth Commandment* was to reſtrain *Private Violence*; and to tie up *Mens Hands* from raſhly *Aſſaulting*, and *Hurting* of one another. And therefore to *Private Perſons*, and in all the *Common Circumſtances* of *Life*, the *Command* is *Absolute*, and admits of no *Reſtriction*; *Thou ſhalt not Kill*. But in the *Publick Adminiſtration* of *Juſtice*; In *Defence* of a *Man's own Life*; In a *Lawful War*, where the *Welfare* and *Security* of our *Country* are at ſtake; in theſe *Cases*, as the *Deſign* of the *Law* is not concern'd, ſo neither muſt

the *Meaning* of it be extended to them.

23. A N D so it is in the Point before us: *Swear not at All*, says our Blessed *Saviour*. But *in what Cases?* And *after what Manner?* Why not on every *Slight Occasion*; Nay not on *Any Occasion*, where, without violating the Bonds of *Justice* and *Charity*, you can avoid the doing of it. And even there where you cannot, yet *Swear not after the Manner* that the *Jews* were wont to do; for whose Correction our *Saviour*, as I shall presently shew, deliver'd the *Prohibition*, of which we are now speaking.

24. A N D this brings me to the (3d) and last Thing I have to observe, for the clear Understanding of the *Words* before us: And that is this; That if we will come to a Right Apprehension of our *Saviour's Intention* in them, we must Examine what there was *Amis* in the *common Practice* of the *Jews*, as
to

to this Matter ; and by that we shall be able the more easily to judge, what is *forbidden* to us in it.

25. NOW the Faults of the *Jews*, as to this Point of *Swearing*,

were these: 1st. * That they allow'd themselves to *Swear*, almost upon any *Occasion*, tho' never so *Vain* and *Impertinent*; Provided only that they did not *Swear* by the *Sacred Name of God*; and which indeed, they agreed, was not to be taken into their Mouths but upon some *great Occasion*, and with a *due Regard* had to the *Honour* of it. But that which was yet worse, was, 2ly: † That they supposed that by *Many* of those *lesser Oaths*, they

* Vid. *Philon. de Test.*
 ὅτι ἐν ἱσθμὶ νόμον :
 p. 769, 780. --- See
 Dr. *Lightfoot's Exercit.* on *St. Matth.* in
 Loc. p. 148, 149, fol.
 Inſomuch that *Aben-
 Ezra* accounted this
 to have been one of
 thoſe ſins, for which
 God delay'd the com-
 ing of the *Messiah*.
 Vid. in *Decalog*.

† So *St. Auguſt. de
 Serm. Dom. in mont.*
 l. 1. c. 17. *Lightfoot*,
 Loc. cit. p. 149. And
 on *Mat. 23. 16. Muſcul*
 in Loc. *Voff. Hiſt. Pe-
 lag.* p. 522. Nay in
 the *Talmud* its ſelf,
Tit. Shebuoth, there is
 this expreſs *Aſſertion*:

*Qui Jurat per Cælum & Terram, Liber eſt; ſed qui jurat per
 Dei Nomina, tenetur.* Hornb. *contr. Jud. cap. de Juram*: ---
 And indeed what ſtrange ways they have at this very day of
 avoid-

avoiding the Obligation of an *Oath*, is notorious : See to this purpose *Fagius* on *Exod.* xxiii. *Buxtorf*, *Lex. Rabb.* in עבד : *Pug. fid.* pag. 730. from their own *Authors*. In short, it was upon both these Accounts that *Martial* fell so severely upon them in that *Epigram*, l. ix 95. And which sufficiently shews, both how ready they were to *Swear*, by those *lesser Forms* here mention'd ; and how little they thought themselves obliged by them.

they were not so strictly obliged to *Speak*, and *Act*, according to the *Intention* of them ; but that they might, without being *Forsworn*, either *Dissemble* their *Knowledge*, or *Neglect* their *Promises*, which they Confirm'd only by such *Oaths* as these.

26. T H A T these were the *Measures* by which the *Jews* govern'd themselves, as to this *Matter*, both their own ancient *Writers* tell us ; and our * *Saviour* himself, in part, declares to us. And I need not say any thing to shew, that the *Design* of all this was to avoid the *Obligation* of the *Third Commandment* ; to the *Due Observance* whereof, our *Saviour* therefore, in this place, intended to reduce his *Disciples*. 27. AND

* See Mat.
v. 35, 36.
---xxiii. 16.
&c. See the
foregoing
Notes.

27. AND to that end, 1st:
That he might the better keep up
the Reverence of an Oath, he ex-
pressly *forbids* that *Customary* and
Familiar Use, which the *Jews* had
been wont to make of it. *I say*
unto you, Swear not at All; Neither
by Heaven, for it is God's Throne;
nor by the Earth, for it is his Foot-
stool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the
City of the Great King. That is,
*Swear not at all after * that*
Way that the *Jews* were
wont so readily to do;
Nor in † *such Cases*, in
which they therefore made
use of these *lesser Forms*
of *Swearing*, because they
thought it neither *De-*
cent, nor *Lawful*, to *Swear* by the
Name of God.

* See *Heinsius*: In
Loc. Calvin. Harm.
Evang. in Loc.

† i. e. *Voluntary*
Oaths: For in all such
as were *Imposed* by
Authority, they were
not permitted to *swear*
otherwise than by the
Name of God.

28. NOW that which yet more
confirms to us the Reasonableness
of this *Interpretation*, is, that our
Saviour himself, in the prosecution
of this very Subject, plainly re-
strains

strains his Discourse to the *same Cases*, in which the *Jews* were wont to use those *Forms of Swearing*, which he here mentions. *But let your Communication*, says he, *be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay.* That is, in your *Private Discourse and Affairs* with one another; let it suffice you, instead of *Swearing* after the *manner* of the *Jews* here reprov'd, barely to Affirm or Deny what you have to say: Or at the most to add some Innocent *Asseveration* to it, for the farther satisfaction of him to whom you speak; *For whatsoever is more than this, cometh of evil.*

29. AND thus far it was undoubtedly the Design of our Saviour, to *Forbid the Practice of Swearing Altogether*; and to declare it, in *such Cases*, to be *Utterly Evil and Unlawful*. And therefore, as to what concerns *this kind of Swearing*; (and to which both the *Practice* of the *Jews* here intended

tended to be *Corrected*; and the Instances given of the *Oaths* which they made *Use* of; and the *Direction* of our *Saviour* how to *behave* our selves on *such* *Occasions*, do *All* evidently *refer*;) the *Prohibition* is *Universal*, and admits of *no* *Exception*; I say unto you, *Swear not at All*: no not tho' what you *Swear* be never so *True*, or you should be never so much *Provoked* to *Swear* to it.

30. B U T indeed, I am apt to believe that our *Saviour* intended somewhat more than this, in his *Prohibition* as to this Matter: And that, because the *Abuses* which the *Jews* are charged with in this particular, required somewhat more to be done for the security of that *Commandment*, which he was here concern'd to *restore* to its *full Force*. And that is this: That because such is the Nature of Mankind, that we are but too apt to trifle with the most Sacred Things; as
we

we see the Jews, in the Case before us, most notoriously did; who for that reason set up the *lesser* kind of Swearing here mentioned, that so they might both the more *freely* use it, and the more *easily* break thro' the *Obligation* of it: Therefore our Saviour resolved, at once, to prevent all future *Corruption* of this kind, by utterly * *Forbidding* Men to Swear any otherwise, than by the *Name* of God only.

31.

* So Hierome, in Loc. Epi. phan. Hæc. xix. thus

speaks of this passage: 'Εγὼ δὲ οὗτοι τέτοιον νομίζω διαπίσαι καὶ κύριον, διὰ τὸ μέλλειν τίνες λέγειν ὡς ἄλλοις ὀνόμασιν ὅρκον περβάλλεσθαι. But above any, St. Cyril admirably explains and confirms this, *Lib. vi. de Ador. in Sp. & Ver.* p. 212. And affirms it to have been a great part of our Saviour's design in this very passage. For having shewn, that we should *avoid* all Swearing, as much as may be; he adds, that if we must needs Swear, Ὁρκισθε ἔσω Θεός, μὴ τὸ ἐτέραν Ὄνομα παρακομιζέτω τινῶν. And then he goes on to shew how contrary to this the *Practice* of the Jews was; and how our Saviour labour'd to Correct this Error, p. 213. Ἀλλὰ τί ᾤσθητε Ἰουδαῖοι ἡλιδιωτάτῳ ἔννοϊαν καλεῖσθαι λέγουσιν ὁ Σωτὴρ, μὴ δὲ ἴν' ἀπομνηστὴ λέγων, μήτε ὡς τῶ ἑσθλῶ, &c. Ἀγὼ ἐκείνοι ἀπεθώπλις ἔφασκον, ταῦτα χρησίμως ὁ Σωτὴρ ἐφθόγγεσθαι, πανταχὴ κατέπλεον, καὶ ἡ οὐδ' ὅσον ἐξουρεμίνον ἐλίσχων αὐτῶν τὸ ἔνγε τέτοις ἐυλαβέες. And having farther shewn the Grounds of this Restraint, he thus concludes, p. 214. Ἐσω τοιγαρὺν τὸ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ, περὶ τῶν τοῖς ἀείσαι βίβιν ἡρημένοισι ὅρκου χρεῖα τὸ καὶ τὴ δύναμις --- Ἐπὶ δὲ ἀτιμάζοιτο πρὸς τινὲς τὸ ναὶ, καὶ τὸ οὐ, ᾧ Ὁρκων ἡ χρεῖα τετέλεσθαι λοιπὸν ὅτι τὸ μείζον ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς, μᾶλλον δὲ ἢ κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν κτίσιν.

31. A N D if this be allow'd, then here we shall again have another good Account of the *Universality* of our *Saviour's Prohibition* as to this matter. *I say unto you, Swear not at All; that is, not at all by Heaven, or by the Earth, or by any other the like Forms: But when you shall find it needful to Swear, Swear directly by the Name of God; and then you will both the more rarely do it, and when you shall do it, will be the more likely to Swear truly, and to Perform to the LORD your Oaths.*

32. F R O M what has been said, we may now see what that *Swearing* is, which our *Blessed Lord* has forbidden, as *Unlawful* to us *Christians*: Namely, *First, To Swear at all in our Common and Private Affairs, with one another; when there is neither any Suitable Occasion for it; nor any Necessity laid upon us so to do. And, Secondly, To use those little, affected Modes*

Modes of Swearing, which Custom and Design brought in among the *Jews*, and which are still but too much allow'd of among us at this day. And by *Both* which, the *Majesty* of God is *profaned*; *Perjury* is *increased*; *Faith* and *Confidence* are *lessen'd* among Men; and their *Immortal Souls* are continually *exposed* to *Ruine* and *Destruction*. I shall therefore make a few *Practical Reflections*, upon Each of these *Kinds* of *Swearing*; and so conclude this *Chapter*.

33. A N D, *First*: As to the *Case* of *Light* and *Customary Swearing*, it is certain, That for a Man to *Swear* in his *Common, Ordinary Conversation*; where there is either *no need at all* of an *Oath*, or none that is *Proportionable* to that *Reverence* which ought to be paid to it; is *Absolutely Evil*, and *Unlawful*. It is indeed to *Profane* the *Sacredness*, and to *Prostitute* the *Design* of an *Oath*: And puts such
an

an † *Affront* upon God, as we would be ashamed to put upon one of our *Fellow-Creatures*.

† See this Argument managed by St. *Athanasius*,

with great Elegance, *Lib. de Passion. Cruce Dom. To. I. p. 995.*

34. AND yet, alas ! How ordinary a Practice is this among us ? And how often do we see Men *Call God to Witness*, not only without need, but with such little regard too ; that I am afraid many times they do not know themselves when they do so.

35. NAY and well were it for them, if they did this only upon too *light Occasions* : But very frequently they do it upon such, as are extremely *Indecent*, if not *Sinful*. To *Bear Witness* to their *Lewdness*, their *Profaneness*, and their *Debauchery*. To *Bind* their *Obligations of Iniquity* upon their *Souls* : And to *Confirm* their *Envious*, their *Malignant*, and *Covetous Purposes*, against their *Neighbour*.

F 36. THESE

36. THESE are, God knows, very terrible Considerations: They make me even tremble at the remembrance of them. And yet thus is *God's Name profaned* without Horreur; and we suffer it without Concern.

37. BUT I must go yet farther: For tho' this be that *Swearing* which our *Saviour* seems chiefly to have spoken against in this place; yet I doubt not but that much more is required of us. And therefore I add, 2dly: That as a Man ought *never* to *Swear*, but upon some *Great*, and *Solemn Occasion*; so neither should he *Swear*, of *Choice*, even *Then*; Nor till he has first endeavour'd, as far as is fitting to avoid it.

*Isocrat. ad
Demoni-
cum.*

38. IT was the Opinion of a *Heathen Moralist*, that a Good Man ought never to *Swear*, but upon One of these *Two Accounts*; Either to *Serve his Friend*, Or to *Vindicate Himself* from some *Foul* and *Scandalous Aspersions*.

39. THO

39. THO' in this, I think, he was too severe; yet as, I presume, there are not many Cases in which a Man ought *voluntarily* to Swear; so, I believe, this one *General Rule* may comprehend the most of them: Namely, That we should never do it, but when it is necessary, either for *God's Glory*; our *Own Justification*; or our *Neighbours Good*. But as for any other Considerations, I am perswaded, that it were better a Man should *sit down* under any tolerable *Inconvenience*, than flee to an *Oath* for the *prevention* of it.

40. A N D this I say as to the Case of *Voluntary Oaths*: As for those which are *Imposed* by *Publick Authority*, the *Subjects Rule* must be to yield to them in all *Honest* and *Lawful Matters*; and to take such, as he can, with a good Conscience, take. As for the *Reasonableness* of *Requiring* them, that is their business to consider who ob-

lige us to the *taking* of them : And who ought to remember, that they shall assuredly answer to God for it, if by imposing them *too often*, and upon *too slight Occasions* ; where neither the *Necessity of Government*, nor the *Publick Peace* require the *doing* of it ; they shall cause God's *Name* to be *profaned* ; shall *burden* their *Neighbours Conscience* ; and, by degrees, *take off* very much from the *Religion* and *Reverence* of *Swearing*.

41. But, 3dly : and to conclude these first sort of *Remarks*. As the *Commandment* here referr'd to by our Saviour, *Thou shalt not For-swear thy self* ; and expounded by that additional *Paraphrase*, *But shalt perform to the LORD thine Oaths* ; has ever been look'd upon to relate * more especially to *Pro-missory Oaths* ; in which the *Danger* of *Perjury* is much the greatest, and there will therefore need the greatest *Care* and *Circumspection*

* See *Grot.*
in *Loc. &*
Explic. De-
cal. Exod.
xx. 7.

to be used, in order to the *prevention* of it: So am I apt to think, upon all these Accounts, that we ought to look upon our selves as yet more concern'd to Avoid *such kind of Oaths*, as far as it may be in our power so to do, rather than *any others*.

42. A WISE Man will oblige himself, as seldom as he can, by a *bare Promise*: Because he cannot tell what may happen, nor to what Inconveniencies he may expose himself, by the making of it. And surely much less ought a *Good Man* to bind a *Promise* upon himself by an *Oath*; unless it be upon some *urgent Occasion*, and in which he shall account it to be his *Duty* so to do.

43. AND this may suffice to have been observed, with relation to the *First* thing here forbidden; viz. the *Frequent*, and *Unnecessary*, and *Unworthy Usage* of an *Oath*. As for the *other Case* proposed; I mean

the Abstaining from those *lesser Modes of Swearing* here *referr'd* to; and, I believe, *forbidden* too by our *Saviour*: It may be consider'd;

44. 1st: **T H A T** tho' it should be *doubtful* whether it be *simply*, and *absolutely Unlawful*, to make use of them; yet it *cannot* be *questioned* but that it must be much *Safer*, *not to do so*: Nor can there be any *reason* given, why a *Wise* and *Good Man*, should ever *venture* upon the *use* of them.

45. **T H A T** it must be much *Safer* to *abstain altogether* from them, is manifest from hence, that it is (at least) *probable* that our *Blessed Lord* did intend, in this place, to restrain the *use* of them: I am sure no one can ever shew, upon any good Grounds, and such as may justify a Man's Conscience in the allowance of them, that he did not.

46. **A N D**

46. AND then, for the *other part* of my *Affertion*; That there can be no reason for a *Good Man* to *venture* upon the *use* of *them*, it is evident; Because, those things which, in such a Case, a Man *swears by*, must be consider'd either as relating to God, and Terminating the Oath in him; And * * So our Saviour determines it, Mat. xxiii. 16, &c. then, to *swear by* them, is the same thing as to *swear by God himself*; and to prostitute *such Oaths* to a *Common Usage*, is as criminal as to profane the very *Name of God*: Or if they are *uncapable* of being thus *referr'd* to *God*, and for that reason may be thought *not to oblige*; then is the *use* of them *vain* and *delusory*; and so either *no End at all*; or, to be sure, *no good one* can be design'd by them.

47. BUT, 2dly: Whatever becomes of this Reflection, thus much is certain; That to use any of these *Oaths* with the Intention of the *Jews*, here condemn'd by our *Saviour*;

viour; that is to say, for the Promotion either of *Common* and *Vain Swearing*, on the one hand; or of *Fraudulent* and *Deceitful Swearing*, on the other; or to recurr to *such* kind of *Oaths* in *any* Case, in which we should not think it *decent*, or *lawful*, to *Swear* by *God himself*, is *absolutely Unlawful*; and *undoubtedly prohibited* by *Christ*, as such.

48. BUT here then I must not be Misunderstood: For tho' I say that a Good Christian ought not to *Swear* by *any*, but *God only*; yet I do not pretend that we must always do it with a *direct Mention* of *his Name*; and in those *express Terms*, * which some have vainly thought alone properly to constitute an *Oath*. Many are the *Forms* into which the *Substance* of an *Oath* may be cast, and in several of them the *Name of God* not at all *express'd*; and yet the *Oath* be made by *him only*.

49. THUS

* *Augustin*, T. 2.
Epist. 89.
ad Hilar.
Illi (sc. *Pelagiani*)
quantum a-
liquos eo-
rum audi-
vi, quid sit
Juramen-
tum pror-

sus Ignorant. Putant enim se non Jurare quando in Ore habent
scit Deus, &c. Quia non dicitur PER DEUM. Et de Verb.
Apost. Serm. xxviii. cap. vi. To. x.

49. THUS St. Paul, tho' he generally mentioned the very Name of God, yet sometimes he put his Oath into another Form;

and * *Protested by the*

Rejoycing which he had

in Christ Jesus our

Lord, 1 Cor. xv. And

when often times we

our selves lay our

Hand on the Holy

Scriptures, and ha-

ving first conceived

the Substance of the

Oath, conclude with

this Form, So help

me God, and the Contents of this

Book: We as really Swear by God

Alone, as if we had altogether

stopp'd in the former part of our

Appeal; or only said with the

Apostle, *God is my Witness.*

50. IN all these Cases, it is

enough that we make it plain that

we refer to God, and to him Only,

for the Truth of what we speak:

And

* That this was properly an Oath, St. Augustine flily contends, *Serm. de verb. Apost. xxviii. c. 5.* And refers to the propriety of the Original Greek for proof of it. But the Syriac Version is more exprefs; and puts in, by way of explication, the very word, *I Swear.* And yet others doubt of it, and think it to have only the Form of an Oath, without being really so. See Basil, in *Psal. xiv. To. I. p. 133. E.*

And then howsoever our *Words* may run, the *Oath* will still be understood to *terminate* in *him Alone*.

51. I SAY to God ONLY: Because otherwise tho' we should *Swear expressly* by God, yet if we shall joyn any *Other* together with him, as the *Jews* did sometimes heretofore, and as those of the *Church of Rome* do notoriously at this day: In such a *Case*, our *Oath* will again be faulty; and we shall, in the very *Manner* of our *Swearing*, be guilty of a *Sin*, but little less criminal, than that of *Perjury* its self.

52. AND thus have I offer'd to you such *Considerations*, as seem'd necessary to shew, what that *Swearing* is which our *Saviour* has truly *Forbidden* under the Gospel. I shall conclude this *Point*, with those *Words* of the *Son of Sirach*, *Eccclus. xxiii. 9. Accustome not thy Mouth to Swearing, neither Use thy self*

self to the Naming of the Holy One. For as a Servant that is Continually Beaten, shall not be without a Blew-Mark; so he that Swareth, and Nameth God, Continually, shall not be Faultless. He that useth much Swearing, shall be filled with Iniquity, and the Plague shall never depart from his House.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

Of the several Ways of Confirming what is Spoken, or Promised, under the Degree of an Oath; How far They may be made Use of in Mens Private Conversation? And for what Reason it was not fitting That Men should have been Allow'd to Go any Farther?

[But let
your Commu-
nication
be Yea, yea;
Nay, nay.]

I. **H**AVING now shewn, from the Words of our Blessed Saviour, how careful a Good Christian ought to be not only *Not to Forswear Himself*; but, as far as he is able, *Not to Swear at All*: It remains, for the final clearing

ing of this Subject, that we go on, upon the same *Principles*, to enquire, How we are to behave our selves, in our *Common Discourse*, with One Another? And here the Rule proposed to us is this; *Let your Communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay*: And this Reason given, why we ought to confine our selves within the bounds of it; *For*, says our Saviour, *Whatsoever is more than this, cometh of Evil*. I shall distinctly consider each part of it; And endeavour, *First*, To shew you, What our *Duty*, with relation to this Matter, is: And then, *Secondly*, To convince you, of the *Reasonableness* of that *Motive*, which our blessed Saviour has here made use of, to oblige us to walk according thereunto.

2. And, *First*: For what concerns the *Rule* here laid down; It was the Opinion of a very learned Man in his Remarks upon this Passage; That these *Words* of our Sa-
Grot. Com.
in Lac.
 viour,

viour, Let your Communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; are to be expounded by those of St. James, to the same purpose, Jam. v. 12. Let your Yea, be Yea; and your Nay, Nay: And the account he gives of Both of them is this; That our Actions should be agreeable to our Expressions; and that whensoever we promise any thing, we should be sure to take especial care that our performance be accordingly.

3. THO' this be, no doubt, the Duty, and should be the Care of every good Christian; yet can I, by no means, think it a proper Account of our Saviour's Meaning in the Words before us: In which it was certainly his Intention to direct us, How to manage our selves in our * Discourse, or as we render it, our Communication with one another; and not how to conform our Performances to our Promises.

* 'Ο λό-
γος ὑμῶν.
Sermo ve-
ster.

4. THAT

4. THAT St. James had a regard to this *Passage* of our Saviour, in that Exhortation which he gave to the same purpose, I make no doubt: Nor shall I deny, but that they may possibly have *Both* of them meant the *same thing*. But that either the One, or the Other, intended to restrain the Doctrine here delivered concerning *Swearing*, to *Promissory Oaths* only; or indeed aim'd at any thing more than to shew us, How we should behave our selves in our *Conversation* with one another, does not appear from either of their *Expressions*; nor ought, without Reason, to be supposed by us.

5. AND therefore, 2dly, and to come more closely to the *Explication* of the *Words* before us: As it is plain from the whole Tenour of our Saviour's Discourse in this place, that a good *Christian* may, without all scruple, *Affirm* what is *True*, or *Deny* what is *False*;
fo

† So Dr.
Hammond
Pract. Ca-
tech. §. Of
Swearing:
And in his
Paraphrase
on the
place.

so the least we can infer from the Repetition here made of the *Yea* and *Nay*, is this; † That if *One Assertion* or *Denial* of either should not be sufficient to satisfy the Person with whom we converse, of the *Truth* of what we speak, we may *renew* our *Discourse*, and confirm it again and again to him: And by that means move him the rather to believe us, when he shall find us *constantly* to *persevere* in our *Assertion* or *Denial* of it.

6. NOR, indeed, can any Question be reasonably made of the lawfulness of our *doing thus much*, to satisfy the Jealousie of our Neighbour, and to justify our own Fidelity. For if we may innocently declare what we know Once, what harm can there be in doing it a second time? And if it be requisite that we should do so, to gain the better credit with our Brother; and to convince him the more undoubtedly of the truth of what

what we say : seeing both the *End* for which we do it is *Innocent*, and there is nothing *Unlawful* in the *Act* its self ; where can the *harm* of such a *Repetition* be ?

7. **THIS** therefore is the least we can suppose our *Saviour* hereby intended to allow us to do, for the better *Confirmation* of what we *Promise*, or *Affert*. And I cannot tell but that his *Words* may fairly be extended a great deal farther ; and be understood, 3dly ; To allow us , if need be , not only to *re-iterate* what we say, and thereby to fix the belief of it the more firmly in the mind of him with whom we converse ; but that with some kind of * *Earnestness* too in the *Repetition* : With some such *Vehemence* of *Expression* as may serve to add a *New Force* to our *Words* ; and effectually shew that we have both duly consider'd, and are very well assured of the *Truth* of what we *Report* ; Or of our *Re-*
G solution

* So *Nich. Fuller*, *Miscell. Sacra*.
 l. i. c. 2.

solution to fulfil what we Promise, in them.

8. THIS was the Method which our *Blessed Saviour* himself commonly follow'd in his *own Conversation*: And frequent Instances we meet with of it, in all the parts of his Gospel. So in this very

* And which tho' the learned *N. Fuller* seems reasonably enough to deny to be a *formal Oath*; yet he plainly proves it to be a *Vehement Asseveration*: especially when *doubled*, as we often find it, in our *Saviour's Discourses* to have been. See his *Miscell. Sacr. Lib. I. cap 2.*

*Chapter, Verse 18. * Verily I say unto you*: And again, *Verse 26. Verily I say unto thee.* And that this may reasonably be presumed, to have been allow'd us in the present *Passage*, we may conclude from hence; not only that this is the *least degree* of Assurance we can give to

the *Truth* of what we say, above that of a *simple delivery* of it; and neither *cometh of Evil*, nor *tendeth to it*: but that the very *Expressions* themselves which we render *Yea*, and *Nay*, do import, not a bare *Affirmation*, or *Denial*; but that with

with some such *Vehemence* as this. Infomuch that in the Holy Scriptures themselves, we find the word which we render * *Tea*, made use of instead of an *Asseveration*; and by our own Interpreters *translated* accordingly. † And even where it is not so, yet the Discourse its self shews, that there is somewhat more than a meer *Affirmation* designed by it; as might easily be made appear, in several *Examples*, were it needful to insist upon it.

* *Nai*, and *Amen*, are in *Scripture* indifferently put for each other. So what in *Mat.* xxiii. 36. is *'Αμὴν*: in *Luke* xi. 51. is *Nai*. In *Rev.* xxii. 20. They are joyn'd together to the same purpose: And so they are again, 2 *Cor.* i. 20. And in the lxx. what the *Hebrew* calls נאמן, *In Truth*, or *Verily*, they render *Nai*: Infomuch that *Theophylact*, on *Mat.* v. 18. *Verily I say unto you*, explains it by, *Tea*:

Τὸ *'Αμὴν* βεβαιώσιν δέον, ἀντὶ τοῦ, *Nai* λέγου ὑμῖν. And *Vatabl.* here renders it, *Certè*, *Certè*.

† See *Mat.* xi. 9. *Luke* xii. 5. *Rev.* i. 7. xvi. 7.

9. LET us add to this, that in the *Stile* of the Sacred Penmen, the *Repetition* of any *Word*, generally Denotes somewhat of a

* A plain Instance of which we have in 2 Kings x. 15. where when Jehu ask'd Jehonadab whether his heart were truly with him ; he answer'd, וְיָהוּא וְיָהוּא, *It is, and It is.* And to this both the *Chaldee* and *Syriac* Versions hold ; expressing the Repetition ; Tho' we, with the *Greek* and *Latin*, neglect it. And the design of this take from two persons, very well versed in those Languages ; *Duplicatur est*, says *Munster*, ad *Majorem Rei Affirmationem*. *Geminazione verbi vehementius Affirmat*, says *Vatablus* ; q. d. *Proculdubio diligo te ex Animo.*

* *Vehemence* designed by it. Hence it is that our *Saviour* does not only commonly make use of the *Asseveration* before mention'd ; but when he would imprint what he said, in a more particular manner, upon Mens minds, and engage them to a more serious Consideration of it ; Doubles it too ; *Verily, Verily, I say unto you.* And from all which put together, we may, I think, very safely conclude, That we also, after the *Example* of our *Blessed Master*, may not only with great plain-

ness and *earnestness* Affirm the Truth of what we speak ; but may, if need be, add some such *Asseveration* to it, as he was wont to do ; and even fairly Interpret the very Words before us, to allow of it.

10. FROM what has been said, it appears; Either that such *Asseverations* as those I have now been speaking of, do expressly fall *within* the *Design* of the *present Text*, (and that some have thought to be the more probable;) Or most certainly, * are *not repugnant* to it. But now, 4thly: and to advance yet one step higher: What shall we say to another sort of Confirmation, frequently made use of heretofore, and not uncommon with us at this day; whereby to convince Men of the *Truth* of what we say; and that is, by Pledging (as it were) somewhat which is very valuable to us, for the certainty of it.

11. THIS is that kind of Confirmation, which, as distinguished from the fore-going, is usually called * *Obtestation*: And it differs

* See Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. vij. Where shewing that his *Γνωστὰς*, or *Perfect Christian*, ought not to Swear, he thus shews (from the *present Text*) how he should Behave himself: Ἀρκῆ τόνων αὐτοῦ ἦσεν τῇ σιωπῇ αἰδέσει ἢ τῇ ἀγνήσει, προσεῖναι τὸ Ἀληθὲς Λέγειν, οἷς παρέστιν ἡ μὴ διαρρήσαν αὐτὸν τὸ βέβαιον ἢ σπουδαίον. Pag. 729. B.

* See Sanders, de Juram. Oblig. Pral. v. §. 4.

from an *Oath* in this; That an *Oath* has always a *respect* to God, and either *expresly*, or *by construction*, denotes an *Appeal* to Him for the *Truth* of what we utter: Whereas, in the Way I am now speaking of, we only interpose the Authority of somewhat, which is either *Evidently Certain*, or *Apparently Dear* to Us; to bespeak our *Sincerity* in what we Deliver under the *Caution* of it.

12. S U C H a Ratification as this is that which we meet with so commonly in the *Old Testament*,

* *As thy Soul liveth*. And it has been thought by some, that *Joseph* really did no more than this, when he seem'd to † *Swear* to his Brethren, *by the Life of Pharaoh*, Gen. xlii. 15. And as for the *New Testament*; || What if that *Form of Speech* made use of by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 31. and which

* 1 Sam. i. 26.
—— xvii. 55.

† *Vid. Saunders: de Jur. Oblig. Præl. v. §. 7.* Of which Opinion also was St. Basil, in *Psal.* 14.

|| See below.

which some, as we have seen, will have to be an *Oath*, was indeed no more than an *Obtestation*: *I Protest By your Rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our LORD.* At least I cannot but think, that Those

|| Primitive Christians, of whom *Tertullian* speaks, meant no more; who refused to *Swear* by the *Fortune*, or *Genius*, of their *Emperours*; lest they should seem to *Appeal to the Deities of the Heathen*: But yet freely gave Assurance of their Fidelity to them, by their *Health and Safety*, which (as he expresses it) was *very dear to them*; and *equal*, in their account, with the *greatest Oath*.

|| *Vid. Tertul. Apolog. cap. 32.* 'Tis true he there says expressly, *Jurantis-- per salutem*; but then he afterwards speaks more precisely, *Pro magno Juramento id Habemus.* And *Athanasius*, mentioning the Oath of *Syrianus* to *Constantine* the Emperor, says not that he *Swore*, but *Confirm'd* his Promise to the *Alexandrians*, Διεβεβαίωσατο μαρτυρούμεν & τῷ σωσῆειαν, *Apol. ad Constant. To. I. p. 689.* But *St. Basil* is express to this purpose,

in *Psal. xiv. To. I.* Ἐπὶ δὲ τίνος Λόγος, ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ὄντες, ἢ ὅτι οὐκ ὄντες, ἀλλὰ διαπρατὰ περὶ τὰς ἀκούοντας, ὡς ὁ Ἰωσήφ & Αἰγυπτίον δικαιοσύνην, Νη τῷ Ἰσραὴλ ὁμνυς Φαριζαῖ. Καὶ ὁ Ἀπόστολος τῷ περὶ Κορινθίους Ἀγάπῃ ἐαυτῶν παρυσίων, ἔφη, Νη τῷ ἡμετέραν χάρισιν ἢ ἔχω ἐν Χριστῷ, &c. p. 133.

13. THAT such kind of *Confirmations* as these, of the *Truth* of what we speak, may (upon occasion) not only *Innocently*, but *Commendably*, be made use of; for the better prevention of down-right *Swearing*, is, I think, not to be doubted: But yet I cannot tell, whether they may be reckon'd to fall within the direct *allowance* of the *present Text*, tho' they are certainly * consistent with the design of it. And therefore, I do suppose that next to *Formal-Swearing*, these kind of *Obtestations* ought the *most rarely*, and with the *greatest caution*, to be made use of by us.

* So St. Basil, *loc. cit.* who therefore excuses St. Paul, as not contradicting our Saviour Christ.

14. BUT if the Matter be weighty; and if it be needful to do somewhat more than ordinary to convince the Person with whom we discourse, of the *Truth* of what we speak: And if such a *lesser Ratification* of it, will prevent our recurring to the *last* and *highest*, I mean,

mean, that of an *Oath* : I cannot see why we should not rather chuse to pledge our *own Honesty or Truth* ; Or to corroborate what we say, by comparing the certainty of it, with somewhat of which there can be no doubt ; such as *our own*, or *his Life* with whom we *converse* ; rather than accustom our selves to *Call God to Witness* in any Case, in which it may lie in our power to avoid it.

15. A N D thus have I done with the several kinds of *Confirmation* of what we affirm , *below* the *Degree* of an *Oath*. I cannot tell whether it may be needful for me to take notice of yet another *Method*, which has but too much obtain'd in the World, to the same purpose: And that is, 5thly, When to *Affert* the *Truth* of what they speak, Men flee to some *Curse* or *Imprecation upon themselves*, if they *Prevaricate* in it. But as every *Oath* does in its Nature imply an
Appeal

* Plutarch,
 Kεφ. Ρωμ.
 Vol. I. p.
 491. Παρ
 ὅρκους
 καὶ ἄλλων
 τελευτῶν
 ἢ ὁππορ-
 κίας.

Appeal to the *Justice* of God, as well as to his *Knowledge*; and, by consequence, does infer a * *Tacit Imprecation* of his *Vengeance* upon us, if we *deal falsely* with our *Neighbour*: So thus much we may be sure of, that were such *Imprecations*, otherwise, never so *lawful*, in order to this end; yet they ought not to be *used* at *any time*, or upon *any occasion*, in which we may not lawfully take an *Oath*. And therefore that both out of *Charity* to our *Selves*, and out of *Reverence* to God's *Judgments*; we ought to lay aside the *Practice* of such *Curses* altogether: Seeing they can neither be ever made without *Horror*; nor may be made in any *Case*, wherein we may not give our *Oath*, not only with an *Equal Satisfaction* to our *Neighbour*, but with greater *Decency* and *Conformity* to the *Principles* of *Christianity*.

16. AND

16. AND now, to lay together, in short, the several Rules, by which we are to Govern our selves in our *Communication* with one another; according as I have hitherto been more largely stating of them to you.

17. IF what we say be a *Matter of meer indifference*; so that it is of no great consequence, either to our selves, or any other, whether we are believed or no: In that Case it may suffice * *barely* to relate what we *know* of it; without troubling our selves, by any of the *Ways* I have now been speaking of, to give any farther *Confirmation* to it.

18. IF our Discourse be of such a nature, that it may concern our Neighbour to give credit to it; or it may, perhaps, upon our *own account*, be convenient that he should do so: We may then *confirm* the Truth of what we assert, either by a * *repeated Assurance* of it; or, if that

that will not suffice, by adding such an * *Asseveration* as may shew that we speak very *seriously*, and with a *well-grounded Confidence* of what we say : such as *Verily*, or *Indeed*, or *In-Truth* you may *Believe* me ; or by some other Expressions of the like nature.

19. IF this does not yet satisfy the Mind of our Neighbour, and the Subject of our Discourse be so important as to demand a still *higher Conviction* of the Truth of it ; then, *Thirdly*, I conceive we may proceed to a yet higher and more forcible *confirmation* of what we say, by that more *weighty* kind of *Assurance*, which, if not comprehended under the Expressions of the *present Passage*, is yet certainly within the *Reason*, and may be built upon the *Grounds* of it. Such are those * *Obtestations* so usual among our selves, *Upon my Word* ; *If I am Alive* ; *As I am an Honest Man*, and the like. And such

such was that of St. Paul heretofore, 2 Cor. xi. 10. *As the Truth of Christ is in Me.* Only as these are still *greater Corroborations* of the Truth of what we speak than the Other; so ought they to be used *more seldom*, and with *greater care*, and upon more *weighty occasions*; when 'tis very highly expedient that we should be believed in what we say.

20. AND here we must stop in our *Communication with one another.* For the next *Degree of Assurance*, above this, is an *Oath*: And that I have already shewn you, must very *rarely* be made use of; indeed *never* but when we either *cannot*, by any means, *avoid* it, or the *Matter* is such that we ought not to *decline* it.

21. WHICH being thus re-<sup>[For what-
soever is
more than
these co-
meth of E.
vil.]</sup>solved, in answer to the *first thing* I proposed to consider; Let us go on, in the next place, to see, what the *Import* of that *Motive* is which
our

our Saviour here proposes to us, to engage us to keep within these Bounds, in our common Affairs with one another ; and that is , That *whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil.*

|| So Casta-
lio: Epif-
copius, &c.

22. IT has been doubted by Some whether what we render *Cometh of Evil* , might not more properly have been translated, || *Cometh of the Evil-One.* But as the Original is certainly capable of either of these Senses ; so the Assertion of our Saviour will hold good in both of them : The Custom of *Vain-Swearing* being altogether wicked and unreasonable ; and not only proceeding from an *Evil Principle* , but in its nature, tending to an *Evil End* too ; and upon all these Accounts *Coming from the EVIL-ONE.*

23. AND First ; *Whatsoever is more than these Cometh of Evil.* And that whether we respect * *Our Selves* , or * *Others* ; * *The Custom of*
Ma

Making, or the * Cause of Requiring an Oath, for the Confirmation of what we say.

24. IF we consider the Grounds of Common-Swearing with respect to * Our-Selves: It must proceed either from an * Evil-Custom, or from an * Evil-Principle; and upon both those Accounts, be utterly Wicked and Unjustifiable.

25. F O R (1st:) As to the * Custom of such Swearing; We know that every Sin is by so much the more *hainous* in its self, and more dangerous to our Souls; by how much the Habit of it is the more deeply rooted in us. Inasmuch that it is from this that a Man takes his Denomination; and is look'd upon to be either a Good, or a Bad Man, according as the Common Practice of his Life bespeaks him to be.

26. T H E Best Christian may be tempted, and fall into Sin; and sometimes do that which he ought not to do. But yet whilst this is
not

not his *Custom* ; whilst the *General Bent* not only of his Desires, and Endeavours, but of his Actions, and Conversation too, lie towards his Duty ; neither will God exact every such Sin of him, nor ought Men to censure him too severely for them. For this is the Misfortune of our Present State , and while we are in this World, will

Jam. iii. 2. always be so ; that in *Many Things we shall Offend All*.

27. BUT when once any Sin becomes *habitual*, and Men make a *common*, or rather a *constant*, *Practice* of it : the very *custom* of it renders such a Sin both *unpardonable* by God, and justly *censurable* by all good Men.

28. SO that supposing then that *Common* and *Vain-Swearing* are *sinful* ; as both our *Saviour* here warrants us, and I have before shewn, we ought to account it : The *Custom* of such *Swearing* must be yet *more Evil* ; and the Sin not the

the *less*, but the *greater* for proceeding from it.

29. B U T indeed before Men can arrive to such a *Custom*, there must be in them some *Evil Principle* or other to give Birth to it: And *such Swearing* must, upon this account also, *Come of Evil*, that it must be derived from some *Source* that most certainly is so.

30. F O R since *such Swearing* is not only plainly *Forbidden* in the *Gospel*, but is withal, in its own nature, so *Indecent*, and *Unfitting*; that 'tis impossible for any Man who has either any true *Value* for God, or has ever seriously consider'd the *Meaning* of an *Oath*, to approve of it: Certain it is, that that Man must be either very negligent of Himself, and very unsensible of his Duty; or he must become altogether wicked and profane, who allows himself in the *customary practice* of it. And from which soever of all these *Principles*

H his

his *Swearing* does proceed, what our *Saviour* here tells us of it will still remain true, That it *Cometh of Evil*.

31. N O R will this Usage be found to fall any less under the *same Character*, if we shall consider it with respect to *those* who require such *Oaths* of *Others*, and prompt Men on to the Practice of them.

"See Chap.
II. §. 18.
Add. Isidor.
Pelusiote. E.
pist. 155.
Lib. I.

32. * F O R since to encourage another to *Sin*, but much more to require what is *Evil* of him, must be highly criminal; as being not only contrary to the *Duty* which we owe to *God*, but also to that *Charity* which we ought to have for our *Neighbour's Soul*: Certain it is, that no one who looks upon it to be unlawful to *Swear vainly*, can, without *Sin*, allow, much less encourage and oblige another so to do. And therefore it must remain that upon this Account also, as well as upon those I have already mentioned, this Practice must be confessed to *Come of Evil*.

33. B U T, indeed, were it not for the *Evil*, that is to say, the *Wickedness* of Men; there would be neither any *Need* of *Swearing* at all, nor any *Temptation* to it. And this will yet more Verifie our *Saviour's* Assertion; and shew that the very Ground and Foundation not only of *False* and *Vain-Swearing*, but of all *Swearing* whatsoever, Cometh of *Evil*.

34. N O W that I thus make out. The only Solid Reason that can be given why Men should ever *Swear* at all, is upon the account of its Usefulness, or rather Necessity, for the *Confirmation* of what they say. But now were it not for the *Corruption* of our Nature, and that *Falseness* and *Insincerity*, which so much abounds in the World; and for those *Jealousies* and *Suspensions*, which Men have entertain'd of one another upon the account of it; Where would be the *Need* of any such *Confirmation*?

Were there no such thing as *Malice*, or *Envy*; *Interest*, or *Design*; *Covetousness*, or *Injustice*; *Lying*, or *Diffimulation*, known among us. But, on the contrary, every one was *Honest* and *Ingenuous*; and might *securely* be *trusted* by his Neighbour, as such. In short, were our Condition so happy, that Men reckon'd their *Word*, as Sacred as their *Oath*; And would be as careful of what they *Said*, as of what they *Swore*?

35. BUT because, God knows, the Case is much otherwise with us; and Men are so full of *Tricks* and *Cheats*, are so *Subtle* and *Deceitful*, so *Vain* and *Unconstant*, that we know not where to have them, or when to rely upon them; and it is hard to find out any *Bond* that is sufficient to assure us that they *act sincerely*; therefore it has been found necessary to *recur* to this *Obligation*: That if there be any *Fear of God*, or any *Sense of Good-*

Goodness remaining to them, they may by this means, at least, be engaged to *deal uprightly*; and not presume to *Call God to Witness*, but when they are resolved to *Speak and Act*, as they ought to do.

36. AND now when such is the Ground of our *Appealing* to God at all; when 'tis the *Wickedness* and *Falseness* of Mankind that has given occasion to the Use of an *Oath*; and without which there would never have been any need of it: Well may our *Saviour* give this for his Reason why all Honest and Good Men should decline *Swearing*, as much as they can, *That it cometh of Evil*; that is, was found out as a *Remedy* to the *Evil* of our Natures, and to Secure the *Truth* of *False* and *Insincere* Men.

* For sure a better, or more sensible Consideration urged by *Phor.*

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Epist. I. p. 34. And St. Basil thus uses the same Argument: *Αἰσχρὸν γὰρ παντὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ ἁγιότητι ἐαυτὸν καθηγορεῖν ὡς ἀναξίον ἰσχυρῶς, καὶ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ Ὁρκῶν ἀσφάλειαν ὁμιλεῖν.*
In Psal. xiv. To. I. p. 133. D.

fible *Motive* cannot be offer'd to engage such Persons to abstain from it, than this ; that 'tis an *Affront* to their *Honesty*, a *Scandal* upon their *Integrity*: At least that it is a *Tie* which was never intended for Men of their *Character* ; nor can be allow'd by them, without seeming to own, that they are not so *faithful* and *ingenuous* as they would be thought to be.

37. BUT, *Secondly* : As the *Practice* of *Swearing*, especially in our *Common Dealing*, and *Conversation* with one another, howsoever it be consider'd, *Cometh of Evil* ; so, to complete the Iniquity of it, will it be found to *Tend* also unto *Evil* : And upon that Account, as well as upon those already mention'd, *to come from the Evil One*. And that especially in these (3.) *Respects*: As it is apt,

(1.) To

- (1.) To give an *Evil Example* to *Others*.
- (2.) To take off from the *Reverence* of an *Oath*; and from that *Due Regard* which ought to be had to it. And,
- (3.) In the *Consequence* thereof, to lead Men into a *General Profanefs*; into an *Unconcernedness* for, if not into a *Contempt* of, whatsoever is *Sacred*.

38. AND (1st.) The *Common Practice* of *Swearing*, *Tendeth* to *Evil*; Inasmuch as it is *Apt* to give an *Ill Example* to *Others*.

For tho' this be a *Sin* which has neither any *Pleasure*, nor *Profit*, to recommend it; nor should Men therefore, one would think, be apt to be tempted to it: Yet alas! Experience shews us, that even Cu-

stom its self is *alone* sufficient to propagate an *Evil Practice* ; and to prompt Men to do that themselves, which they see others do before them.

39. THIS is so just a Reflection, that it is, perhaps, the Only Account that can be given, How Men Come to *Swear* so *Ordinarily*, and upon *such little Occasions*, as they do: In such *Cases*, where there is neither any manner of *need* of an *Oath* for the *confirmation* of what they *speak* ; nor have they, often times, any such *design* in it. But 'tis a fashionable way of *Adorning*, or rather of *Profaning* their *Discourse* ; the Practice of it is become almost Epidemical : And they have, insensibly, accustomed their Tongues to it, till at last they neither know how to avoid it, nor are themselves sensible when they do it.

40. SO easily are Men brought to *Profane* the *Name of God!* And such a Mischievous Influence has the Practice of *Common-Swearing*, begun at first by a few Profligate Men, had, to spread a General Contempt of the Divine Majesty over the Face of the Earth; and to weaken One of the most *Sacred Bonds of Truth and Fidelity*, that was ever given to Mankind.

41. A N D this brings me to the next Ill-Effect, which this *Customary Swearing* has had, in Consequence of the *Foregoing*: And that is,

(2dly.) To take off from the *Reverence* of an *Oath*, and from that due Regard which ought to be had to it.

42. T H A T *Perjury* is a Sin both too lightly Consider'd, and too commonly Practis'd among Us; is too plainly seen, and has,
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I believe, been too sensibly felt likewise, by many of us, to suffer us to make any doubt of it. And how far the Prevalence of *Common*, and *Vain-Swearing*, may have contributed to *this Evil*, I shall leave it to every serious Christian to consider.

43. IN the mean time, thus much is evident; That an *Oath*, from being one of the most *Sacred* and *Sure Bands* of *Faith* between Man and Man, is now become of very *little Benefit* or *Security* to us. Men take them without *fear*, and too often without *considering* what *they do*: And when they *have taken* them, they many times shew as little *Regard* to them in their *Practice*, as they at first did *Reverence* in Approaching to Them.

44. AND, indeed, how should we expect that he who puts no Value upon an *Oath* in his *Common Talk*, should be much more Concern'd for it, only by the Addition

tion of a little more *Solemnity* to it? Or be afraid to Break his Promise, or to Dissemble the Truth, which he Ratifies by an *Appeal to God*, when *Imposed* upon him; who has no Regard to Either, tho' he *Swears* to them an Hundred Times of his *Own Accord*. Alas! An *Oath* is only terrible to a Young Beginner: To him who Considers what it is; and who has the Fear of God's Knowledge and Justice, still Vigorous upon his Mind. But to him who *Swears* every Hour that he lives; who Trafficks with it, and could not tell how to carry on his Business without it: Who *Swears* with as little Concern as he Talks; and *Values* an *Oath*, no more than he does a *Common Lie*: What can we expect but that as such a *One's Regard* to this *Sacred Tie* is very *small*; so his *Care* to answer the *End* of it should be proportionably *small* too.

45. TO

45. TO such a terrible Height of Wickedness is *Common-Swearing* apt to bring Men at the last. Nor does the *Evil* of it stop here; but,

(3dly) and lastly; From the *Particular Contempt* of an Oath, carries Men on, by Degrees, to a *General Profaneness*; to an *Unconcernedness* for, if not a *Neglect* of, *whatsoever* is *Sacred*.

46. AND this is still but the *Natural Progression* of this *Sin*; and the Next Step to that I before mentioned. For since the *Honour* of God, and his *Power* and *Justice*, are all *despised*, and that in a most outrageous manner, by the *Sin of Perjury*; so that a Man must have laid aside all *Regard* to *These*, before he can harden himself to the *Practice* of *That*: What should hinder him who is become so great a Proficient in Wickedness as to be able to trample

trample under foot the *Honour*, the *Power*, the *Justice*, and even the *Vengeance* of God too, in *One Great Instance*; from proceeding, if need be, to do it as readily in *any Other*?

47. **T H A T** to *Swear* is not only truly an *Act of Religion*, but one of the most *Solemn Acts* of it; and most apt to stir up in our Minds a *Fear of God*, and *Reverence* of his *Name*, is not to be deny'd;

48. **T H A T** to do this *Lightly*, and *Unadvisedly*; but especially to do it *Falsly*; only to carry on our *Own Designs*, or to promote our *Own Interests*, at the *Expence* of *God's Glory*: must be not only horridly to profane the *Sacredness* of an *Oath*, but to *flee directly* in the *Face of God*, and to *bid defiance* to *Damnation*; the necessary *Importance* of an *Oath*, will not suffer us to doubt.

49. **N O W** when once Men are become so deeply rooted in *Impiety*

ty as to be able to do this, what is there left to restrain them from a *General State of Profaneness and Irreligion*? It is but proceeding upon the same *Principles*, and doing that in the *Other Instances of Religion*, which they do in *This*: And why they should not do so, if ever their *Passions* or their *Interests* should prompt them to it, I cannot see; and we need not question but that they will go on accordingly.

50. I F therefore we have any *Regard to God's Glory*; if any *Concern for our Own Souls*; let both these persuade us not to allow our selves in a *Practice so offensive to the one, so dangerous to the other*.

51. L E T those *despise the Sanctity of an Oath*, and *Prostitute it to a Common and Profane Usage*; who know not how *Sacred a Thing* it is, and how dangerous to indulge the *Customary Practice* of it. But let it suffice us to take that liberty which our *blessed Lord* has left

left to us, not only as the most *safe*; but as (in the General Affairs of Life,) *sufficient* too. And let us so much the rather content our selves with it, by how much the more plainly it appears from all those Considerations I have now been offering to you, *That whatsoever is More than That, Cometh of Evil.*

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Wherein an Enquiry is made into the Causes Both of that Common, and False-Swearing, which so much Abounds in the World : And some Directions are Offer'd for the better Prevention of Both of Them.

I. I HAVE now done with our Saviour's Discourse, relating to the Point of Swearing ; and might with that, have reasonably enough concluded my Reflections upon *This Subject*. But because there are some things which I could not so well refer to any of those *Heads* I have before treated of ; which yet, I conceive, may usefully be observed by us upon this

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this Occasion : I shall chuse rather to put them together, a little out of place, than wholly to pass them by.

2. NOW the Summ of what I would farther propose, for finishing of this whole Subject, may be Reduced to these two General Heads :

Ist I will consider, How it comes to pass, that Men are so *Forward to Swear*, almost upon *Every Occasion* ; and too often Venture, even to *For swear* themselves.

And having given such an Account as may be necessary of this Matter, I will go on,

II^{dly}, To Offer some particular *Directions*, for the better *Correction* and *Prevention* of Both those *Evils*.

I 3. AND

3. A N D, 1st. Let us consider, How it comes to pass, that after all our *Saviour* has said to the contrary; yet we see Men, nevertheless, not only so *Forward* to *Swear*, almost upon every Occasion; but too often Venturing even to *Forswear* Themselves.

4. I N the Prosecution of which Enquiry, it is not my Intention to make any laborious Search into the *Causes* of that *Common - Swearing* which has so *Universally*, almost, *Obtain'd* in the *World*; and makes up a Great part of *Mens Ordinary Discourse* with one another. For tho' that be, without Controversie, a very *Grievous Sin*, yet is it withal a very *Unaccountable* One too. A *Sin* which Men commit to *Serve* no *End*; to *Gratify* no *Lust*; to *Carry on* no *Business* by. Without *Profit*; without *Pleasure*; I
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had almost said, and without *Temptation* too. In short; A *Sin* by which they *Dis honour God*, and *Ruine* their own *Souls*, to no purpose: but do the Work of the Devil, without that Common-Encouragement which, in most other Cases, he allows wicked Men, to reward their doing of it. So that for ought I know, the *Best Account* that can be given, why Men ever fall into this *Sin* at all, is; That they have slipp'd into the *Habit* of it, they know not how: and *Custom* has made it a *Fashionable Vice*. They look upon it as a *Modish Way* of *Discourse*; and think it would bring an Imputation upon their *Breeding*, if they should altogether Forbear it: And render their Conversation *Flat*, and *Insipid*; for want of that *Profaneness*, which indeed is, many times, the only thing that is remarkable in it.

5. BUT this is not that *Swearing* I am now concern'd for: Nor do we find that our *Saviour* has had any regard for such *Sinners* as these. If Men will run into *Evil Habits* without *Need*, it is but fitting they should Perish without *Pity*: And not expect to be argued out of a *Vice*, which is so far from having any Shew of *Reason* to *Justifie* it; that it has not so much as any *Temptation*, that may serve to make an *Excuse* for it. The *Swearing*, I am now speaking of, is of another nature, and practised by a better sort of *Men*. By such as acknowledge the *Obligation*, tho' they do not sufficiently consider the *Sacredness* of an *Oath*: And for that reason allow themselves, on every little Occasion, to flee to the Use of it; as long as they do but take care not to *confirm* any thing, but what is *true*, by it. And whence it comes to pass, that so many, even among the higher rank of *Christians*,

ftians, are yet thusforward to Swear; is the first thing I proposed to Enquire.

6. AND here (1st.) It may be consider'd, that every one, who has any sense of Probity remaining in him, *desires* to be *Believed*; especially in what he *seriously Affirms* or *Denies*: And cannot but think it very hard to be suspected of any *Falseness* and *Untruth* in his *Discourse*. Besides that, often times, it may be of Concern to him that he *should* be *Believed*: And to leave his Veracity in doubt, may prove not only to his Disgrace, but to his Damage also.

7. NOW *Interest* and *Reputation*, are Two of the *Dearest Things* in the World to most Men; and the Love of which they can the most hardly overcome. And therefore when *these* shall prompt a Man rather to *confirm* the *truth* of what he speaks with an *Oath*, than to run the hazard of suffering in *one*,

or, it may be, in *both* of them ; there had need be a deep sense of *Religion*, and a very awful dread of an *Oath* indeed, rooted in a Man's Heart, to keep him from so doing.

8. LET us add to this, (2dly) That unreasonable *Jealousie* which abounds in Mankind towards each other ; and moves them upon the least appearance of Reason ; nay, and often-times without any ; to *suspect one another*. Hence it is that if a *Matter* be but of never so little importance ; if it be for a Man's advantage, or disadvantage ; for his pleasure, or trouble, to be thoroughly convinced of it : It is seldom known that they will be satisfied with the *bare Word* of him who reports it unto them ; or with any thing less, than his *Swearing* to the *Truth* of what he says. And if, out of *Conscience* to his *Duty*, and being *unwilling* to break in upon the *Sacredness* of an *Oath*, he should
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chance to *refuse* so to do; it is great odds but he shall be *urged* and *provoked* to it: And hardly avoid the censure of *speaking falsely* from those, who having no respect for an *Oath* themselves, will not easily be persuaded that another should have any higher regard to it; or refuse to *Swear* upon any other account than this, that he is conscious to himself that what he says is *false*; and therefore he dares not *Swear* to the *Truth* of it. And many there are, even among the better sort of Men, who by this means are betray'd into an undue Usage of an *Oath*: And chuse rather to *Swear*, when otherwise they would not do it, than to bear the *Reproaches* of those to whom they speak, by a *peremptory refusal* of it.

9. A G A I N (3dly) To Men who have either no *true sense* at all of *Religion* upon their *Minds*; or have not sufficiently consider'd the *Nature* of an *Oath*, and convinced

themselves thereby how much the *Honour* of *God* is concern'd in our using of it ; and how cautious we, therefore, ought to be, upon what *Occasions* we do *Swear* : The *customary forwardness* which we complain of in most Men to recur to *this way* of *confirming* what they say, may be, and (I believe) has been, a great *inducement*, to the over-easie *practice* of it.

10. THERE are few Christians so ignorant as not to know, that *Perjury* is a very *hainous Sin*, and such as may not be committed, without the *Peril* of *Salvation*. But yet there may be many who are still to learn, that to *Swear* upon a *small occasion*, tho' a Man *swears* nothing but the *truth*, is of its self *criminal* ; and, as such, *forbidden* in the *Gospel*. Now such Persons as these, being sensible how usual it is for Men to do this, look no farther ; but follow on as they see others go before them ;
nor

nor feel any *Remorse* of *Conscience* for doing that, which they never understood had any great harm in it.

11. A N D that which may possibly have contributed to confirm them in this practice is ; that they see themselves call'd upon to *Swear*, so very often, not only in their *own Private Concerns*, but even by *Publick Authority*. For since *Charity*, as well as *Duty*, obliges us to think that nothing is done by *that* but upon the most *mature deliberation* ; and we know how great a number of *wise* and *good Men* must concur to the *making* of a *Law* with us ; whose *Wisdom* we cannot, and whose *Piety* we ought not to doubt of : It is but reasonable to conclude, that they had certainly a *due Regard* to the *Honour* of *God* in all their *Constitutions* ; and would never require us to *Swear* on any *occasion*, in which they esteem'd it either

ther *unlawful*, or *unseemly* for us to do it.

12. HOW far such Reasoning as this may have disposed some unwary Persons to *Swear* more frequently, and upon *lesser occasions* than they ought to do, I cannot tell: But I think it may deserve to be consider'd, Whether the *Multitude* of *Cases* wherein not our *Laws* only, but those of all other Countries, do *oblige*, or, at least, *allow* Men to *Swear*; may not have somewhat contributed to that *forwardness* of doing it, which we see and complain of in them, upon other occasions: And have disposed them to be more *ready*, than they ought to be, to *recur* to an *Oath* in such *Cases*, wherein there is neither any *Command* of *Man*, nor any *Excuse* before *God*, for their doing of it.

13. I SHALL offer but one Account more of this Unwarrantable *Readiness* of Men to *Swear*; And

And that is (4thly) From the Refusal which some, of late, have made of *All Swearing* whatsoever : And in *opposition* to whose *Error*, some may possibly have been so unwary as to run into the *contrary Extreme* ; and to have concluded, that so far is it from being *unlawful* to *Swear* in *any Case*, that, rather, there is *none* so *small* in which they may not freely do it.

14. IT is the Infirmary of many, of more Warmth than Judgment, that they are always in *Extremes* : And think the only way to secure themselves from Error, is to fly as far from it as they can. Not considering that there may be as little *Reason* in *one Extreme*, as in *another* ; and that, according to the old Remark, *Truth*, as well as *Vertue*, is seldom found in *either*.

15. THUS some out of an over-eager Opposition to *Popery*, have cast off *Episcopacy* ; and for
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15. T H U S some out of an over-eager Opposition to *Popery*, have cast off *Episcopacy* ; and for
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fear of *Superstition*, would have all *Decency* thrown out of the *Church*. And I verily believe we had not seen at this day so much *Profaneness* and *Irreligion* among us, had not the *detestation* of some Mens *Hypocritical Pretences* to *Godliness*, first prompted on others to fly out into a *Looseness* of *Living*, and from thence into a *Neglect* of every thing that is *Sacred*. And how far this Vice of *Common-Swearing* may have gotten Grounds by the same Means, and have been improved too among the rest; I shall leave it to those who have consider'd, from what *Time* it has begun more especially to *prevail among us*, to determine.

16. SUCH therefore may, I suppose, have been the *Causes* of that *Readiness* which we find in Men to *Swear*, even upon the most *common*, and *unjustifiable Occasions*. But now, as for the other *Sin* proposed, that of *Perjury*; I can scarcely

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ly tell to what *Cause* to ascribe the little Concern which many shew of *falling* into *that* ; because, indeed, I can scarcely tell what *Cause* should be *sufficient* to *harden* their *Consciences* against it.

17. T H A T the *Frequency* of *Swearing*, and the *little Occasions* on which Men sometimes allow themselves in the *Practice* of it, may have very much taken off from their *Reverence* of an *Oath*, I can easily believe ; and by that means have disposed them to *Swear* more *carelessly*, and with *lesser consideration* than they ought to do.

18. T H A T by their *often* and *careless Swearing*, they may probably sometimes have incurr'd the Guilt of *Perjury*, *unawares* ; and by that means have been unhappily made acquainted with it ; I do not doubt.

19. B U T yet still, to *Swear falsely*, where a Man *knows* what he *does* ; and *deliberately Designs* so to do ;

do ; this adds so much not only to *Common-Swearing*, but even to an *Unwilling Perjury* also ; that a Man ought to become a great Proficient in Wickedness, before he can bring his Mind to it.

20. THIS therefore is a Sin which I can ascribe to no other Cause than that of a *Profane Heart*, and a *Hardned Conscience*. Whether it be that a Man falls into it through an *absolute Infidelity* ; or that by a *long, habitual Continuance in Sin*, he is at last become *deprived of God's Grace*, and is given up to be *led Captive by Satan at his Will*. For otherwise, *Perjury* is a Crime of so detestable a Nature, and which has so much of the *falseness* of the *Devil* in it ; that were there but any *Spark of Piety* remaining in the *Soul*, it were impossible a Man should ever be persuaded to *commit* it : Or having *once committed* it, should be able to endure his own Torments ; much less

less should ever return to the Commission of it again.

21. I SHALL therefore seek no farther for the *Cause* of this *Sin*; but shall confidently conclude, that the *Habit* of it can proceed from nothing less than an *Utter Dereliction* of God, and an *Extinction* of *All Sense* of Good and Evil in the *Soul*.

22. WHICH being thus resolved; Let us now go on,

II^{dly}. To Consider, What *Directions* may be offer'd for the *Correction* of these Great *Evils*.

23. AND, 1st: For what concerns the Point of *Perjury*; As I have now shewn, that a Man must be arrived to an Extraordinary Pitch of *Wickedness*, before he can allow himself in the *commission* of it; so I know no way there is to draw Men off from that, but only to

to *awaken* their *Consciences*, if it may be, to a serious *Consideration* of their *Sins*; and by that Means to bring them to a sincere *Conversion* from them.

24. I N D E E D could even Charity its self warrant us to think, that it were possible for Men to be so far deluded, as not to know *False-Swearing*, I do not say to be a *Sin*, but to be a most *hainous* and *damnable Offence*; such a *Sin* for which God has no *Pity*; and it may almost be question'd whether he will afford Men his *Grace* for *Repentance* of it; there might then be also some *hope*, that by a better *Information* of their *Judgments*, as to this Matter, they might perhaps be *reclaimed* from it.

25. B U T when such is the *Notoriousness* of this *Crime*, that 'tis impossible any one should fall into it without *knowing* that he does at the same time *Defie* God, and *make a Mock* of *Damnation*; we must

must conclude that 'tis in vain to hope by any *particular Applications* to *Correct* this *Evil* : And that we must resolve either to reduce such a Person to a *general sense* of *Piety* and *Vertue* ; or to leave him in the *guilt* of *this*, as well as under the *power* of his *other sins*.

26. A N D this, I say, as to what concerns the Point of *Moral Conviction* and *Perswasion*. For, otherwise, one Method there is, and 'tis the only one I can imagine, by which a stop may be put to the Practice of *this*, without meddling with a Man's *other Sins* ; And that is, by a *strict Execution* of *Humane Justice* upon him : And which out of Charity to our Neighbour's Soul, as well as out of Duty to God, and with Regard to the Publick Welfare ; it is great pity but all Magistrates should, with all possible Vigour and Severity, do.

27. H O W much the Welfare of Mankind is concern'd in the

* See the
Stat. V. E-
liz. ch. 9.

Suppression of False-Swearing, I need not say: And what Provilion our Own * *Laws* have made for the better effecting of it, cannot be unknown to those who are intrusted with the Administration of them, and who are especially concern'd to take notice of it. Let me only beg leave earnestly to Recommend it to all such, so far to consider the great *Trust* which is *Reposed* in them; and what an *Interest* every *honest Member* of the *Common-wealth* has to demand their Care in this, more than in any other *Sin* committed to their Censure; as not to admit of any Excuses, nor to shew any Favour, to such Malefactors: Who if, by this means, they shall be brought to a true *Sense* of *their Sin*, and to *Repentance* for it; will then think themselves *Gainers* by their *Prosecution*: And if they shall not, I am sure cannot, by our *Laws*, be too *severely punish'd* for it.

28. BUT

28. BUT, 2dly : As for the other sort of *Swearing* forbidden by our *Saviour*, yet too easily Indulged by many Christians : Whether it be that of their *Common Discourse*, where there is *no Need at all* of it ; Or in the Prosecution of their *Ordinary Affairs*, in which there is no *Sufficient Occasion* for it : Many are the *Directions* that may be offer'd for the *Prevention* of such a *Practice*, proportionable to the several *Principles* upon which Men may be prompted to *allow* themselves in the *Use* of it.

29. FOR (1st.) Should they chance to go on in such *Swearing*, for want of being Convinced of the *Danger* and *Unreasonableness* of it ; The surest Way, in this Case, to draw them off from their *Practice* of it, will be to shew them how *expresly* it has been *Forbidden* by our *Saviour* ? What an *Affront* it puts upon the *Majesty of God* ? And how *Indecent* a Thing it is,

(were there nothing else to be said against it) to *Call* the Great Lord of *Heaven* and *Earth* to *Witness*, on such *Silly* and *Trivial* Occasions, as such Persons cannot but acknowledge, they very often do.

30. B U T (2dly.) Tho' possibly Men may know, in the General, that *thus* to *Swear* is not convenient; yet still they may neglect to take all that *Care* and *Pains* with themselves, that is necessary for the intire avoiding of it, because they are not sufficiently perswaded, how great the *Sinfulness* of it is. This is, I believe, the real Case with very many: And if so, then 'tis plain that here again the Best Way to draw them off from this *Evil Custom*, will be to Convince them of the mighty *Danger* and *Malignity* of it. To shew them, that thus to *Swear*, is not, as they may imagine, some *light* and *ordinary* Offence; nor will be pass'd over by God, as such. That to *Swear*, is to *Appeal* to God: And

And if that be done without great *care*, and a suitable *occasion* for it, we shall put such an *Affront* upon *Him*, as we would be ashamed to put upon one of our *Fellow-Creatures*, and would not endure that any should put upon *our selves*.

31. THESE and the like Considerations, if plainly urged, and seriously laid to Heart; can hardly fail of convincing any rational person of the *sinfulness* of this *Practice*. And having done that, they must, in the consequence of it, oblige him to *Correct* it too; if he be truly such an one as we now suppose him to be, *viz.* an *honest* and *upright Christian*.

32. BUT (3dly.) Should not this be the Case; but the Person who is engaged in this *Evil Habit* should be one who pursues this *Swearing* not so much out of any *particular ignorance* of, or *unconcernedness* for, the *Sacredness* of an *Oath*; as out of a *general levity* of *Mind* and *insensibility* of his *Duty*: Then

it will not be sufficient to argue with him, concerning the *Nature* and *Importance* of an *Oath*, and with what *Care* and *Circumspection* we ought to approach to the taking of it: But we must proceed with such a one in a more *General Way*; and bring him to *Reverence* an *Oath*, by teaching him to be more *considerate*; and to have a greater value for all the other *Acts* of *Religion*.

33. SUCH a Person as this, as he does not *Prophane God's Name* out of any particular dis-regard which he has for an *Oath*, more than for any other thing of the like nature, so neither must he be brought off from the doing of it, by any particular Considerations relating to the *Sacredness* of an *Oath*; but must be perswaded, in the general, to become *Serious* and *Devout*; to *honour God*, and to pay a *due Respect* to every thing that *relates* to him: And this will *Compose* his *Thoughts*, and *Influence* his

his Affections in *all* the *Offices* of *Religion*; and in *this Particular* among the rest.

34. B U T now (4thly.) and to go yet higher: What if the Person who thus *Swears*, should not only be more *careless* and *inconsiderate*, than he ought to be, in the *Business* of *Religion*; but should, by Principle, be become a *despiser* of it? What if he be one who *Believes* not in *any God at all*; but *Laughs* at all our Talk either of a *Providence* here, or of a *Judgment* hereafter?

35. T H O' in this Case, as in the foregoing, the best way to *Reclaim* such a one's *Common Swearing* would be to *Convince* him of his *Errors*; and, by so doing, to cut off the *first Cause* of this *Irregularity*: Yet till that shall be done, somewhat, I think, may fairly be offer'd, upon his own *Principles*, to *Restrain* this *Vice*, without meddling with any of his others.

K 4 36. FOR

36. F O R, indeed, how foolish and ridiculous a thing must it be for such a one, (if he be in good earnest,) by *Swearing*, to *Appeal* to *God*, who professes to *Believe None*; or at least *None* that has any *Concern* for, or *Knowledge* of, what we do here *Below*? How *absurd*, for him to refer himself to the *Censure* of a *Future Judgment*, who would be thought not to *own* any *State* at all after *this* in which we *now live*; nor, by consequence, to *revere* any such *Final Inquest*.

37. O R if in all this he only acts a part; How *base* and *dis-ingenuous* must he then shew himself to be; to offer an *Oath* for the *confirmation* of what he *promises* or *asserts*; Who neither believes any *Obligation* to be *thereby* laid upon him to *deal* ever the *more sincerely* for it; Nor can have any design in *Swearing*, but only to *impose* upon the *Credulity*, and to *ridicule* the *Religion* of his *Neighbour*?

38. W H E.

38. WHETHER therefore Men acknowledge the *Principles of Religion* or no, yet certainly *Common Justice* and *Honesty*; nay, or even *Honour* its self, (which with some Men is of greater Authority than both;) should make them ashamed to *Swear*, in any Matter, for the Confirmation of the Truth of what they Speak: Because they know, in their own Hearts, that they do but impose thereby upon those with whom they deal by the *shew* of an *Obligation*; which, how great-soever it may be to others, yet to them is of no *force*; nor lays any *restraint* at all upon them. And, as for their *Ordinary-Conversation*; since to *Swear* in that, is to *Prophane* the *Name* of a *God*, whom other Men do *believe* in, tho' they themselves do not; and which they cannot therefore but think must be very *ungrateful* and *offensive* to them: Methinks even *Civility* and *Good-Manners* should teach them to forbear

bear such *Oaths*, if not for the perpetual *Contradiction* which they thereby run into, as to their *own Principles*, yet at least for that *Affront* which they know they put upon *other Mens*.

39. THESE then are the Ways by which Men are to be drawn off from their *Customary* and *Profane-Swearing*, upon the *Principles* of *Reason* and *Religion*. There is yet (5thly.) Another Method, which the Care and Piety of our *Laws* has set before us, and which it is to be hoped shall now, at length, be made use of in order to this end; and that is, by a strict Exaction of that *Penalty*, which they have order'd to be inflicted upon such *Offenders*, for the *restraining* of their *Profanefs*: And which how small soever it may seem to be, and in truth is, in comparison of the Sin of *taking God's Name in vain*; yet, being duly required, might go very far towards the *prevention* of it.

40. IT

40. I T is true there was something of this kind * long before attempted ; and which one would have hoped should have kept this *Sin* from becoming so *Common*, or rather so *Universal*, as it is, among us. But alas ! What can the best *Laws* do, if they are never put in Execution ? And how little *that Law* has, of late Years, been either *Publisb'd*, or *Executed*, as it ought to have been ; is a *Reflection* that may deserve the *Consideration* of many among us.

* See the
Stat. of
21 Jac. I.
ch. 20.

41. I N the mean time we all now know how that Ancient, and almost Antiquated *Law*, is not only *Revived*, but *Improved* too, in order to *this End* : And such Care taken, that if we would but heartily set our selves to it, I cannot but think we should soon put an end to a great part of that *Prophane Swearing* that has of late so scandalously prevailed among us.

42. A N D to engage us so to do, give me leave to say but this
one

one thing; that for any of us to neglect our *Duty* in this *Particular*; is, in effect, to consent to every such *Act*, as we refuse to bring to light. It is to abet the taking of God's Name in vain: And then let us fear lest we share in the *Punishment*, as we do partake in the *Guilt* of it.

43. BUT (6thly.) and to conclude these Reflections: As it is certain that nothing has more contributed to the Practice both of *False-Swearing*, and of *Common-Swearing*, among us, than the Want of that due *Reverence* Men ought to have of an *Oath*; so I know no way more likely to reclaim Men from the Practice of both, than to Endeavour, as far as may be, to Restore the Use of an *Oath* to its just *Veneration*; and to bring Men, if it be possible, to a more *Sacred Esteem* of it. And in order thereunto, as it is certainly the Duty of *Private Persons*, never to *Swear at all*, but when some more than ordinary *Occasion* shall

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require their doing of it ; so were it much to be wish'd, that the *Necessities* of Government would permit, that an *Oath* should never be *imposed* upon, nor *required* of any, but upon some greater *Exigence* ; to be sure, more *seldom* than now it is. And that when it is required, such Care should be taken in *Administering* of it, as to Raise in Mens Minds a serious Consideration of what they are about : At least that it should be so done, as not to prompt them to a *Dis-esteem* of it ; through an *over-hasty*, and *irreverent* *Dispensing* of this great *Obligation*.

44. AND thus have I shewn, by what *Means*, if by any, not only *Perjury*, but *Common* and *Profane-Swearing*, may be most like to be Corrected and Suppress'd. And for *Engagements* to move every one of us to use our best Endeavour in the Accomplishment of so good and *profitable* a *Design* ; I shall only add thus much, to what I have already offer'd

offer'd, in the Prosecution of this Subject; That if we have any Regard to God's Honour; If any Concern for our own Souls; If any Zeal for the Publick Good; All these call upon us to do, what in us lies, to reform both our selves, and others, as to this Matter.

45. THAT by Common and Customary, but especially by False-Swearing; God's Majesty is abused, and his Wrath and Vengeance very eminently provoked; the necessary relation which every Oath has to him, sufficiently speaks.

46. THAT therefore by such Practices, Mens Souls must be greatly endanger'd; both the * Denunciations of God against such Offenders, and the Quality of the Sins themselves, effectually assure us. But especially by the Sin of Perjury; which, it may be, is of all others a Sin the most hard to be forgiven, because it is the most hard for any one, according to the Principles of Christianity,

* Mal. lii. 5.
Zech. v. 3,
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stianity, sufficiently to repent of it.

47. I N D E E D were a bare *Conversion towards God*, enough to wash away the Guilt of it; a Man might, by *God's Grace*, be brought to such a deep *sense* of his *Sin*, and to so hearty a *Contrition* for it, as to deliver himself from the Danger of it. But if by our *Perjury* we should chance not only to have *abused* the *Majesty of God*, but to have *ruined* our *Neighbour* too: Should we have *Robb'd* him of his *Estate*, his *Reputation*, or even of his very *Life* its self; and in none of all which we can make him any tolerable *Compensation*: How can we ever hope that *God* will be *reconciled* to us; whilst we lie under such an utter Incapacity of ever making an *amends* to our *Neighbour*?

48. A N D then, lastly; For the *Interest* which the *Publick* has in the *Suppression* of such *Swearing*; I have already shewn that *Truth* and *Fidelity*, are the great *Bases* on which
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all *Society* is *founded*; and without which there could be no *Peace*, no *Security*, no *Right* or *Property* in the *World*. And therefore, whatsoever is in any wise apt to *undermine these*; (as *Perjury* directly does, and as *Common-Swearing* naturally tends to do;) ought to be *avoided*, and *discouraged* by all who either *love* their *Own Welfare*, or have any *regard* to the *Publick Good*.

I shall conclude this whole Discourse with that Exhortation of *St. James*, which I have so often referr'd to in it; *James*, v. 12. *Above all things, my Brethren, Swear not: Neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth; neither by Any Other Oath: But let your Yea, be Yea, and your Nay, Nay; lest ye fall into Condemnation.*

F I N I S.



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